

## Prologue

"Eliane! As you are nothing but a fake saint, you're no longer needed!"

I was abruptly summoned to the royal palace ...*because of this?* Your Highness...

Claude, the first prince of the Vercaim Kingdom, looked at me with contempt.

Towards me—*his fiancée*.

He was behaving so dumbly, I was at loss for words?

"Your Highness Claude, what do you mean, '*no longer needed*'?"

In truth, I already knew the answer. But I shall play along with him.

Afterwards, there will be no turning back.

"It's as I've said. You've fooled this kingdom, pretending to be the real saint even though you aren't! This kingdom has no need for a wicked woman like you!"

"Pretending to be a saint...? I don't recall doing such a thing."

"*Fun*, you're still trying to act innocent even at a time like this!"

Claude sneered.

When I was young, I received an oracle from the goddess. I became a saint at the same time the previous saint was no more.

From generation to generation, it was the duty of the saint to pray for the kingdom.

The saint was a person tasked with putting up barriers and channeling the protection of various goddesses.

Because of such a being existed, the kingdom had continued to prosper for many years...

...so, *what on earth is this prince thinking?*

"Your words aside, without a saint, this kingdom will collapse. Does Your Highness know exactly what a saint is?"

"*Ha!* In the first place, something like a saint should just be buried along with the previous generation. How much tax money do you think we have to spend for your meaningless prayers and other unnecessary things? You're nothing but a scammer leeching off the money of the royal family!"

*Scammer...?*

The power within the prayer of a saint was genuine...

—'*to be buried along with the previous generation*'. He had no reason to say such a terrible thing...

Besides, the tax covered only my minimum living expenses?

*In fact, Prince Claude, aren't you the one indulging in luxury?*

"Your Highness, you're mistaken. Actually...—"

"—Enough excuses. Also stop that meaningless prayer. I get goosebumps simply by seeing you kneeling down to pray."

*Huuuh?*

*You sure about that?*

*You think it will be a good idea if I stop praying?*

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*Huuuh?*

*You sure about that?*

*You think it will be a good idea if I stop praying?*

If I stopped praying and something happened to the barriers... by tomorrow, the city might be invaded by powerful monsters? The crops wouldn’t grow either?

I wondered if Claude thought that far ahead—most likely not.

Cause’ the guy was an idiot.

“In the first place, I never wanted to get engaged with you, anyway. However, tradition forces me to be tied down with you, the supposed saint.”

*The feeling is mutual.*

That was right. Claude and I were engaged.

For generations, the prince and the saint always got married when

they grew up.

Even the late Queen, whom passed away of illness, was originally the saint who protected that kingdom...

*‘For me to be engaged to such a handsome boy!’* —when I was a child, the engagement caused my heart to go aflutter.

But right away, *it showed*.

Only his appearance was good—the inside, not so much. He was a dumb person.

His personality was also bad. I wanted to break up with him as soon as I could, but there was the thing called tradition.

Now that Claude had ended it, it was a wish come true...

...despite so.

“You’re basically breaking off our engagement...? But... if you do that, your own reputation will also be...”

...he should still consider that, right?

From my side too, to just go against the tradition, I felt a slight resistance towards the idea.

That was probably why I was still trying to reason with him. ... Although at that point, I was merely doing it out of formality.

“Stop!”

A woman’s voice resounded.

“Just because of me, don’t start fighting?!”

*Ah, this person. What a thing to say.*

The woman who had been standing beside Claude from a while ago—  
—that woman, Leticia, was exactly the reason why Claude only got worse.

*Leticia.*

She appeared to be the daughter of an earl family, and first met with

Prince Claude at a certain dance party.

Certainly, her appearance was very cute.

If she walked down the road, ten out of ten men would turn around.

Claude was also one of those empty-headed men.

In the first place, he seemed to have been eyeing many other women after being engaged with me.

I was aware of that from the beginning, but since I didn't have a fragment of feelings for Claude, I just overlooked it.

"Leticia, I am sorry for causing you discomfort. Of course, for such a delicate girl like you, this is very straining..."

"*Huu, huu...*"

Leticia wept and buried her face in Claude's chest.

But I saw it.

Her grin.

Leticia had a very mean smile, it seemed.

"Elaine, I also heard about what you did to Leticia. Leticia told me every single thing."

"What?"

"You pretended it was an accident, but in reality, you pushed her into a pond, and you also destroyed her personal belongings."

*What is he saying, this person.*

In the first place—as if I would I involve myself with such a girl.

When I passed by Leticia, she suddenly screamed and threw herself into a nearby pond.

Regarding her personal belongings, I saw her breaking them herself.

So that was to lower Prince Claude's impression of me—to steal him from me.

Claude's ridiculousness give me headache.

“Even if a fake saint like you is gone, Elaine, there’s still Leticia—the *real* saint. With her, this kingdom is safe.”

*I see.*

Leticia lied, claiming to Claude she was the true saint.

Honestly, that actually made me laugh—for Leticia to be the real saint... just because she could use a little healing magic, the men around her believed her bluff.

She was adept at lying.

“The truth is, I want to execute you right away. But because the gentle Leticia feels sorry for you, I will let you off the hook and *merely* exile you. Get out of this kingdom at once!”

*Acha—an exile, huh...?*

Well, listening to the conversation so far, I already had an idea that would happen.

Also, for Leticia to feel sorry about me, that was definitely a lie.

In fact, as of the present moment, while Claude was distracted, Leticia was still grinning happily.

“Your Highness. For the last time, I will tell you this—when I, the saint, am gone, this kingdom will be over. Still, do you insist upon exiling me?”

“Eei! You’re still being noisy! This is my decision, it’s final no matter what you say!”

*Alright, alright, you’ve said it.*

I was tired of the role of the saint, anyway.

The only reason I endured until now was because I respect my predecessors, and as the fiancée of the prince, I had my obligations—

—but now that he had said that, it was fine already, right?

“I understand. I shall leave this kingdom at once.”

I turned my back towards Claude and the others.

I could hear them laughing from behind me.

*Whatever.*

Since I was banished, I shall live as I please!

I was sure there would be a big uproar tomorrow and I didn't want to be caught up in it.

# Chapter 1

## The Knight Leader is Actually Popular

After being punched in the face with an exile and the cancellation of my engagement, I was about to leave the castle.

“I wonder what should I do from now on...~”

I couldn’t stay in that kingdom anymore.

I had no other choice but to move to another kingdom.

“At times like this, I wish I know someone...”

But I could think of nobody.

I had inherited the role of the saint when I was a little soon after my mother died.

Since then, most of my time had been spent inside the castle, praying for the kingdom.

Despite so, I still attended dance parties properly, you know?

But my fiancé was Claude. I couldn’t dance with other wonderful people and could only eat in the corner.

“*Tohoho*, I regret not making any acquaintances back then...”

When I was at loss...

“L, Lady Saint!”

Suddenly screaming, a man approached me.

“Knight Leader...”

“What are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be praying...?”

Apparently, the Knight Leader knew nothing about my exile.

Because he usually wore a helmet, I rarely saw his face—but unexpectedly, he was good-looking.



However, he seemed to be frequently lamenting in bars saying, ‘ *I am not popular with women...* ’— turned out he wasn’t aware of it.

The Knight Leader seemed to have a lot of closeted fans in the church, but when I told him that, he wouldn’t believe me.

“Knight Leader, you will be informed of this later, but I am to be exiled from this kingdom.”

“Huh!?”

“Incidentally, my engagement with Prince Claude was also annulled.”

When I told him that, the Knight Leader was surprised.

“B, but the saint is a presence who supports this kingdom from the shadows... It’s because of the prayers of the saint that the knights have easier lives... has Prince Claude gone crazy?”

The Knight Leader was staggered.

Ever since I had become the saint, the Knight Leader had always been concerned about me.

He seemed to have a good understanding of my ability and always supported me.

“Even if you say that, to me, Prince Claude has always been *out of it* since the beginning...”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“If you’re exiled... won’t this kingdom experience mayhem? The fact that demons have not rioted in this kingdom is because you’ve been putting up barriers...”

“Then, do you want to leave this kingdom as well? I am sure it will be fun.”

I seriously tried to invite him.

Despite so.

“I am sorry. I am the knight who serves the king, as such, I can’t abandon this kingdom so easily. I am sorry that I can’t fulfil your expectations, Lady Saint.”

He bowed deeply.

*Ah, too bad.*

But that kind of seriousness was a good aspect for a knight leader.

I felt bad for him, but I couldn't help it, there was no way Claude would retract his words.

“It's fine, I am merely joking.”

Although I appeared strong, at the bottom of my heart, I was hurt—

—I thought I was about to obtain a trustworthy ally...!

“So, Lady Saint, where are you heading to?”

# Chapter 2

## The Saint's Lone Journey

“So, Lady Saint, where are you heading to?”

The Knight Leader asked me.

“Good question...”

I placed my hand against my mouth and thought again.

I had no particular destination.

Nor did I have any reliable acquaintances.

Then, should I travel around and get a glimpse of the world?

Well... with my power as a saint, I could manage to an extent... but the outside world was dangerous.

I hated the idea of experiencing pain.

*...but still.*

“Should I go to the neighboring kingdom, then? If it's there, I might be able to slip inside.”

The neighboring kingdom, Lynchgiham. Since ancient times, my kingdom had been warring with that kingdom.

But now, they had a peaceful relationship.

At least, on the surface, it seemed that they were keeping an amiable relationship with each other to an extent.

The most defining trait of that kingdom was that there were many foreigners—a wide variety of ethnic groups and races existed along each other.

Because of the diversity, Lynchgiham was prosperous...

“Lynchgiham, huh!? Isn't that a good idea?!”

“Right?”

The Knight Leader agreed with me.

*Great.*

Because if he told me that kingdom was bad, instead, I would have lost my destination.

“I will prepare a carriage.”

“I am no longer a saint, though? Wouldn’t that be a problem?”

“Doesn’t matter. This is the only thing I can do for you.”

*Also*, the Knight Leader continued.

“Even if the prince said you’re a false saint, from the bottom of my heart, I know you’re a magnificent saint. Even if the entire world becomes your enemy, I shall be on your side. Therefore, please lift your face.”

“~~~~~!!!”

If he showed me such a serious face, there was no way I wouldn’t turn red!

Aaah, it was truly disappointing I had to leave such a handsome guy behind!



With that, I was able to leave the castle safely thanks to the carriage prepared by the Knight Leader.

“I will be in your care.”

I bowed my head towards the coachman.

“Haha, you’re too polite, child. When I heard that you’re the Knight Leader’s acquaintance, I expected some tough woman, but it’s such a cute girl...”

I was stared at.

By the way, I hid the fact that I was the saint—or ‘former’, to be exact.

It would be better if the Saint’s banishment was unbeknownst to the people of the city to avoid unnecessary worries.

Therefore, I wore the clothes of a commoner and told them I was going to visit my aunt in the neighboring kingdom.

“Alright, let’s head out.”

“Yes.”

*Pakara, pakara, pakara...*

The horse began to gallop steadily.

It seemed that the journey itself would take about a month. Alright, my journey had started. It wasn’t like I was in a hurry or anything.

“Even so, your hair is so beautiful, it’s almost as if you aren’t a commoner...”

“I, is that so?”

Claude had said so;

*“If you’re truly my fiancée and a saint, you must always appear beautiful!”*

That was why I always used first-class cosmetics and shampoos.

However, when I was told that I was beautiful to my face... as I thought, I became bashful.

“Could it be, you’re an aristocrat?”

“T, that’s not true!”

“Hahaha! Sorry, I’ve pried on too much. Don’t worry, if I do anything careless, I will be killed by the Knight Leader, just think of me as a doll.”

The coachman laughed.

*Fu...* I thought I was going to get exposed for a moment, but I survived.

I wiped away the sweat on my forehead using my arm.

# Chapter 3

## Healed some Injured People

As I rode the carriage headed towards Lynchgiham in the neighboring kingdom...

“Hmm...?”

Suddenly, the coachman shouted.

“What happened?”

“No... it seems that a carriage has stopped in the middle of the road?”

“Maybe they’re just taking a break?”

“...Doesn’t look like it.”

I peered outside the window... certainly, as the coachman said, there was a carriage in front of us.

Although it was merely my intuition, I felt like it was a serious thing.

*You’ve come.*

At such times, my intuition was usually correct.

Who could it be?

“Let’s talk to them.”

“If it’s alright with Miss... we might get ourselves into some kind of problem, instead...”

“I am alright with it. It’s not like I am in a rush. Let’s resume our journey to Lynchgiham afterwards.”

“I see, if you say so.”

After I convinced the coachman, we went to the carriage which had apparently halted its course.

...Around the carriage, injured people could be seen.

“What a tragedy...!”

I quickly get off my own carriage and called to one of them.

“What happened to you!?”

“Ugh... are you, a traveler?”

A sturdy-looking bearded man stared at me.

“A demon attacked... we managed to escape, but as you can see...”

“A demon...”

The kingdom I used to live in, Vercaim, was peaceful. Therefore, I had almost forgotten that there were monsters outside the city.

There existed not a single demon in my kingdom, because I had been putting up barriers until now.

“I am sorry, but do you have any potions? Name the price, I can pay...”

Before the man could say anything else, I stopped him by raising my hand.

“There’s no need for a potion. ...Not like I have any on me, anyway.”

“...No, need?”

“Excuse my right hand for a moment.”

I put my hand on his wound.

His wound was bleeding—it looked grievous.

“*Heal.*”

After my chant, a gentle light appeared, centering around the wound.

It enveloped the wound, and by the time the light vanished, the wound had completely healed.

“W, wha! That’s, healing magic!?”

He looked very surprised.

“Miss, you’re a healer?!”

“Hmm... something like that?”

In my kingdom, I was called a saint.

...but of course, I didn't say that. I want to avoid unnecessary confusion.

I also didn't think I should waste time in that kind of situation.

“I will explain later. There are many who're still injured. I shall heal them immediately.”

“I, I understand!”

The injured people lined up in front of me.

“Le, let's start the treatment from those who're seriously injured...”

“There's no need for that.”

Once again, I raised my hand.

“I'll heal them all in one go— *Wide Heal.* ”

A healing light poured from above the injured people.

The wounds of the injured closed before my very eyes—everyone recovered in no time.

“That's why I said there's no need.”

There was no need to prioritize the seriously injured—because I could heal them all at once.

*Fufu—indeed, I am skilled like that.*

“W, we're saved! You're indeed a saint!”

*S, saint, you said!*

The man I had healed first held my hands and said so.

*H-huh?*

*Did I get found out just like that?*



# Chapter 4

## Thank You Very Much

*He, he said saint—did I get found out!?*

That was what I thought, but as I listened to the conversation, I realized that wasn't the case.

"Sorry, I got excited and said something weird..."

The man I had healed first apologized.

Apparently, he didn't mean that I was the literal saint, but I was akin to one to him... or so he said.

"You don't have to apologize... but to compare me to the Saint, that's a terrifying thing to say... please just refer to me as Eliane."

"Lady Eliane, you're truly a savior—thank you."

*Y, you don't have to add 'lady', though!?* Well, whatever...

To the travelers whom had calmed down since then, I asked about their circumstances.

Apparently, they had had gone to a nearby town on business from Lynchgiham. Then, on their way back, a demon attacked.

The name of that demon was 'Behemoth'.

I heard that it was so strong, it could only be defeated by a party formed by of strong adventurers.

Even so, it seemed that those people had put up a good fight—despite so, their opponent was still the Behemoth.

Since they had no chance of winning, they escaped all the way until reaching that place.

"But, why would you go to a nearby city with such a large number of people?"

I asked.

“That’s...”

The man wavered.

By the way, the sturdy-looking uncle’s name was Adolf. Apparently, he was tasked as an escort for that trip.

“...I am sorry, I can’t really answer that question.”

“I see.”

“I am sorry for the uncouth answer, even though you’re my benefactor...”

“I don’t mind. I am not a child, I can see that you have your own circumstances.”

*I see, an influential aristocrat is probably journeying with them on this trip...*

They said they had something to do in the nearby city.

I couldn’t really conclude if it was merely an exchange between aristocrats or a business arrangement.

Those who didn’t reveal their identity were often nobles.

Not to mention, those people were wearing clothes of high-grade material.

But I didn’t bother asking about it.

Because it would be of no use—after all, I was in such a place.

I should just be relieved because they were safe.

“Let me offer my gratitude, too.”

While I was pondering about such a thing, a man alighted from the carriage.

*Is he of the same age as me?*

When he saw the man, Adolf called out.

“Lord Nigel!? How about your injury!? Are you alright!?”

The man whose name was called... Nigel, smiled gently.

“Yes, I am fine. Thanks to her healing magic, my body was refreshed anew.”

He said, confidently.

*Hm...?*

‘Nigel’? Where had I heard such a name...?

“By the way, surely, you mentioned your name is ‘Eliane’.”

“Yes.”

“Thank you very much. You’re my benefactor. If you’d like, I want you to come to my house—I want to thank you.”

“Huh?”

Due to Nigel’s suggestion, I uttered a dumb sound.

What should I do...

It seemed that they were about to return to Lynchgiham.

Either way, I was also heading towards Lynchgiham—therefore, his proposal was very attractive.

However...

“I, it’s not a big deal... there’s no need for you to thank me...”

“What are you talking about? It’s against my principle if I don’t thank you after you’ve used such grand healing magic...

think of it as a medical expense—how does that sound?”

“But...”

He said that it was a grand healing magic, even though in my kingdom, everyone disliked it.

Moreover, none of the people around me—including Prince Claude, ever thanked me...

Perhaps because of that, I wasn’t really used to Nigel’s ‘thank you’.

He persisted.

“...That Behemoth should still be lurking around here... I don’t know your circumstances, but wouldn’t it be too dangerous to travel with only a single coachman?”

Nigel said again.

Certainly, the fact that the Behemoth was still lurking around was scary...

...but I had barrier magic.

With that magic, monsters wouldn’t approach me. That was why I traveled with almost no one.

“If the Behemoth comes again, we will do our best to protect you. If we were to get hurt, I would like for you to lend us your healing magic again. It’s a win-win situation—will you agree to this?”

Well, if he was willing to go that far...

Even though I would be alright, I was worried about the fates of Nigel and the others...

If I were there, I could protect them using a barrier—the Behemoth wouldn’t even come close.

“I understand. Then, for a little bit, I shall burden you.”

I bowed.

Nigel then held my hands, “Really!? That’s great! Because I would prefer for us to not part here.”

His face inched closer.

...Um, *this person is good-looking, alright.*

His golden hair gleamed like a jewel. Even though there was distance between us, the scent of roses wafted.

“Eh, y, yes...”

I was confused, I accidentally blurted so.

When I was with Prince Claude, I never experienced such feelings—I wondered what was happening to me.

“Now let’s head to Lynchgiham. No one can guarantee that the Behemoth won’t attack again, so be on your guard.”

“T, that, about that, I think we will be fine!”

“...? Why do you think so?”

“J, just my intuition!”

“?”

Nigel tilted his head.

Afterwards, we arrived at Lynchgiham without any danger.

## Chapter 5

### Introduction to the Kingdom’s Ruin

#### □ Prince Claude’s POV

Meanwhile, in the Kingdom of Vercaim, where Prince Claude currently resided...

“Leticia, finally, it’s only the two of us... I am glad...”

“I am also glad...”

Inside his room, Claude exchanged whispers of love with his lover, Leticia.

“Today’s work sure was tough... however, I finally finished it and was able to return to my room.”

“Fufufu, Prince Claude, such a hard-worker, you are! That side of you, I love it so much!”

The two sat on the bed and laughed with each other.

Although Prince Claude said something about the work being ‘tough’, he only actually did his job for about 30 minutes before the rest of his duties became *his entourage’s* duties.

Despite so, Prince Claude wanted to preserve his cool image—especially in front of Leticia.

“Now that Eliane is gone, I am happier.”

“Ara, even if she’s your former fiancée, is it alright to say such a thing now?”

“Haha, no problem. In any case, due to this kingdom’s traditions, I was forced to be engaged with Eliane. Now that I know you’re the real saint, it’s only natural for me to annul said engagement.”

“Fufufu, how evil you are... even though it seems that Eliane is in love with you, Claude?”

“Of course she is. To be honest, for me, her love is but a burden...”

Even though Eliane actually didn’t love Claude at all—but Claude was oblivious to that.

“Now, let’s stop talking about Eliane. For the rest of this night, I shall love you.”

“I’m looking forward to that.”

After said exchange, their faces drew closer—

—then, a romantic kiss—

“—Your Highness!”

—precisely at that moment.

The door of the room was slammed open with great force, and a knight came in from the corridor.

The romantic atmosphere was dashed in an instant.

“Is it too hard to knock on the door!? What are you thinking!?”

“I, I am sorry, but there’s something I really need to report to Your Highness!”

*Really, what is this guy thinking...!*

Claude felt resentful—but it was not often a knight would come looking for him like that.

*Why don’t I try hearing him out?*

“...Then, what is it? If it turns out to be nothing, don’t think you won’t receive any punishment.”

His important moment with Leticia was interrupted... on the receiving end of said punishment wouldn't only be the knight, but also his family.

The knight saluted, "A dragon has entered the royal city!"

"Huh? Dragon...?"

The word felt unreal and Claude became dumbfounded.

"What are you talking about? There has been no sightings of dragons since forever. In the first place, aren't dragons of a gentle race that rarely appear in public?"

"Even though that's how things are supposed to be, I don't know! For some reason, a dragon has appeared in the royal capital! It's a certain fact!"

Claude wanted to believe it was a lie, but the knight's face didn't seem to be lying.

"Why, why would a dragon..."

Claude was stunned.

There was no reason for a dragon to come.

Speaking of dragons, their strength was incomparable to the strength of other demons.

Depending on the type, it was said that once one rampaged, it would spit fire from its mouth and reduce its vicinity to ashes...

Furthermore, their endurance was said to be excellent, especially their scales which were difficult to even scratch. Not only were they resilient, their injuries would also heal immediately.

One S-class adventurer... no, even if SS-class adventurers formed a party, would they even have a chance for victory?

It was said that only a party formed of more than 10,000 people could defeat one.

"What about Carina, that SS-class adventurer?"

"She went to a distant town due to a request. Even if we summon her now, it will still take a week for her to return to the royal capital."

“Tch!”

He unintentionally clicked his tongue.

A week from now, at that point, it would already be too late...

...the dragon could turn the royal capital into a scorched land at any given time.

“Prince Claude, I am scared!”

Leticia held on to Claude’s arm.

*Aah, for her to shiver so much... she must be terrified...*

Claude’s love for Leticia grew even more.

“It will be alright—leave it to me.”

Claude patted the head of Leticia.

Then, he turned towards the knight.

“What’s the damage to the royal capital?”

“For now, the dragon is just circling over of the royal capital.”

“Just circling? What is that guy thinking...”

“I also don’t understand. The scene is quite confusing, and we also don’t know what’s the right action to take against a dragon.”

In short— *this knight’s useless.*

“Y, Your Highness! Give us an order! Only Your Highness can contain this situation!”

The knight begged Claude.

*Hmm, it certainly feels good to be told that I am their only hope left...*

If the other party wasn’t a dragon, Claude would have taken control of the knights and try to keep things under control.

However.

“What foolish things are you saying!? In terms of battle, I am only a beginner! Just leave it to my Father and the Knight Leader!”



“B, but!”

“I need to go somewhere. Listen, never let the dragon invade the castle, you hear me, right? ...Leticia, let’s go.”

Claude shoved the knight aside and pulled Leticia out of the room by her hand.

The reporting knight called out to him, “Your Highness, please wait!”

“Your Highness Claude, where are we going now?”

“The underground shelter.”

It was created for the royal family to escape to in case something happened to the royal capital.

*Let’s stay there until everything calms down.*

“Fufufu, how wonderful of Your Highness Claude. The underground shelter must be something else!”

“Precisely.”

Even so, why now? Why would a dragon enter the royal capital now?

Such a thing had ever happened before.

He had completely forgotten Saint Eliane’s words, Claude was deeply confused.

*Well, whatever.*

He would think about it slowly.

Claude rushed to the underground moat with Leticia.

Such was the beginning of the kingdom’s ruin.

# Chapter 8

## Nigel is Loved by Everyone

Thus, we arrived at Lynchgiham.

I alighted from the carriage and said goodbye to the coachman.

“From here, I will be fine. Please relay my greetings to the Knight Leader.”

“Of course! Who would’ve thought that Miss could use healing magic! You’ve given me a good show!”

From there, I would ride in Nigel’s carriage.

By the way, I was worried about the coachman’s safety, so I secretly casted a barrier magic on him.

That way, until his return to the royal capital, he wouldn’t encounter any monster.

“Then, Eliane, let’s go.”

“Yes.”

Along with Nigel, I headed for the entrance of Lynchgiham.

Then, the carriage stopped in front of the main gate...

“Lord Nigel! You’re safe!”

The gatekeeper rushed towards us as soon as he spotted Nigel.

“Yes, I’ve managed to return safely.”

“That’s a relief! We received a report about Behemoth’s sightings around here... everyone is quite worried about you, Nigel!”

“Actually, we did encounter the Behemoth on our way home...”

“Huh!?”

“What’s wrong? Somehow, we managed to escape. Also, thanks to this healer’s assistance, no one remained hurt in the end.”

Nigel gazed at me.

I realized that it was more convenient for me to be regarded as a mere 'healer', so I just played along.

"Then that's good...! Well, everyone's waiting, please enter!"

"Thank you."

Nigel thanked him and we soon entered the city of Lynchgiham.

As expected... judging from the gatekeeper's reaction, Nigel seemed to be an aristocrat.

Otherwise, it would have been impossible to pass through the gate without showing some sort of documentation.

"What's wrong, Eliane? Is there something on my face?"

"N, no...! It's nothing!"

When Nigel stared at my face, I reflexively averted my gaze.

*What is happening to me...?*

*Why am I suddenly feeling bashful...?*

*When I was with Prince Claude, I've never experienced these kind of feelings...*

"Uhm... where exactly is your house, Lord Nigel?"

I felt awkward and shifted the topic.

"It's in the center of the town. It's not very far. You must be tired, but can you endure with a little bit more? I think it will be a bit noisy."

"...? I understand."

Usually, in the city, the closer a place was to the center, the higher the price of the land.

*... and his house is there... Nigel, who are you, really?*

"Lord Nigel is back!!"

"Lord Nigel, as always, thank you!!"

“He’s as handsome as always...”

I saw the people of the city praising Nigel one after another...

“Amazing...!”

I was quite surprised at the sight.

“Haha... even though I told them many times there’s no need to do this. I am sorry for the noise.”

“T, that’s not true...”

Nigel was loved by the citizens—

—perhaps because his family was one that valued people very much.

He was truly the opposite of Prince Claude, who levied heavy tax on the citizens, and was pretty much being disliked by them due to his selfishness...

...Prince Claude never realized they hated him, though.

“What is that tall building?”

Looking out of the carriage, I could make out a tall castle-like building soaring towards the sky.

“That’s the royal castle of Lynchgiham. The royal family lives there.”

“Hee... I see.”

...More importantly, the carriage was approaching the castle?

Was Nigel’s house set up near the castle? Maybe he was respected enough as an aristocrat by the King, hence there was that?

As we approached the castle, my doubts grew stronger.

*Hm?*

*Huh?*

*...No way.*

“We’ve reached our destination.”

The horse-drawn carriage stopped in front of a building.

“But, this place...”

“This is my house.”

“Huh, *huuuuh*—?!”

Surprised, I uttered a loud scream.

That was only natural.

Because we had stopped in front of the castle Nigel had described earlier.

# Chapter 9

## Turns out he's a Prince

"L, Lord Nigel! If you are a prince, why didn't you tell me in the first place?!"

After passing through a room, I protested to Nigel.

"Huh, I didn't tell you?"

"You didn't!"

"I see."

Nigel acted dumb, but then he laughed happily.

*He's a prince, no doubt about it.*

Gosh, his joke was in bad taste...

—to put it simply,

Nigel was also known as Nigel Lynchgiham.

In short, he was part of the royal family of Lynchgiham.

But that wasn't all—

—Nigel was also the first prince, with the right to inherit the throne!

He was the future king!

I was surprised by that.

Well, up until now, I had been accustomed with seeing a cheap version of a crown prince whom was called 'Claude'...

but Nigel carried an entirely different atmosphere than him!

At every single street corner, there were people trying to talk to Nigel.

At first, I already felt that his name was familiar, but Nigel wasn't that uncommon of a name. Also, I never thought I would actually meet the crown prince of a neighboring kingdom.

Therefore, I noticed it late.

“By the way, Eliane, could you stop referring to me as a Lord?”

Said Nigel with a serious look.

“A, as if I could do that—especially now, after I have found out you are the prince. Therefore, I’m afraid I can’t drop the formality...”

“What are you talking about? Eliane, you’re my benefactor. Without you, I don’t know what kind of fate I would’ve suffered.”

“But...”

“Eliane, this is my request. Please treat me like you always have. When you address me as lord, I feel at loss.”

Nigel shrugged his shoulders.

Each of his movements was akin to an actor in a play—I couldn’t help but notice them.

I thought I would argue, but in the end, I decided against it.

Back in my kingdom, when I was still the Saint, I was often addressed very formally too.

But it was a different story when it was between good friends.

In that case, formality would only increase the sense of distance ...or so I felt.

That was why.

“...I understand, Ni, Nigel. From today onward, I shall keep calling you Nigel, as well.”

“Thank you.”

Nigel smiled.

Even though it was such a casual thing, it was as if I saw flower petals flying around him.

“Pardon me.”

From the hallway, people came with a knock.

“Welcome home, Lord Nigel. I heard rumors that Behemoth has appeared outside of Lynchgiham, therefore it’s good to see you safe and sound.”

Said a woman in a maid outfit.

She wore glasses and had an uptight expression.

However, it seemed that she was sincerely concerned about Nigel.

“Yes. Thanks to this girl, I managed to return safely.”

“—or so I’ve heard from the Knight Leader. Something about there being a magnificent healer.”

*Knight Leader?*

“She’s talking about Adolf. You still remember the old man who spoke to you first, right?”

H, huh!?

That dandy-looking uncle... he was the knight leader?

Well now that I had heard the gist of it, it made sense.

The one having a trip was the prince—there was no wonder that the knight leader was one of his escorts.

Despite so, in the end, escaping was the only thing they could manage.

I shivered at the mere thought of the Behemoth’s strength.

“Eliane, I want you to meet my Father.”

“Your Father... which means...”

“His Highness the King of Lynchgiham.”

*“Well of course he is.”*

*Well yeah, of course the prince’s father is the king! That’s only obvious!*

I never expected to have an audience with another king right after getting exiled from my former kingdom...

“...Is it alright for someone like me to meet him? Won’t I... end up unnerving His Highness the King?”



“What are you talking about? I’m sure he wants to meet you as well. My Father will surely be interested in you.”

*Pon— Nigel casually hit my shoulder.*

*I want you to not touch me so casually like that...!*

*Because I will get nervous!*

“Then I shall talk to my Father. Abby, this girl’s tired from the long journey, as such, help her prepare before she has an audience with my Father.”

“Understood.”

“Treat her with respect, alright?”

“That’s only natural.”

The maid called Abby gently bowed to Nigel.

Afterwards, Nigel excused himself from the room.

“Alright then, Lady Eliane. You’ve heard from the Master himself—first, let’s get cleansed.”

Said Abby as she reached out to me.

“I, I will be in your care...”

I couldn’t keep up with the rapid development of the situation.

Thus, I did as I was told and followed Abby.

# Chapter 10

## I Became Beautiful

“How would you like the bath?”

As Abby wiped my body with a towel, she asked so.

After my body was wiped clean, I was taken to the bathroom.

*How spacious—!*

It was even larger than that of the Kingdom of Verclairm’s.

Even though Lynchgiham was supposed to have scarce resources... or so said Prince Claude. He also mentioned something about Lynchgiham’s financial situation being not so good...

When I saw both the city and the castle, I immediately questioned that.

“I, it’s truly comfortable...”

“Fufufu, Lady Eliane, why are you squatting in the bathroom? Could it be, you rarely use such a bathroom?”

Certainly... bathrooms were used exclusively by aristocrats.

When the commoners bathed, they usually did so in the public bath, and only once a week with the purpose of cleansing their bodies.

Once again, there was the fact that I was Prince Claude’s fiancée.

—Normally, I’d be able to use the bathroom every day, however...

“I wonder if it’s been three days ago, I was also in a rush at that time...”

“Is that so? That should be normal, shouldn’t it?”

Abby was convinced.

In the first place, a saint should be allowed to take a bath every day.

However, in proportion to Claude’s heart moving away from me, the

number of times I could use the bathroom also grew more limited. At first, I could use it once every two days, then once every three days... finally, once a week.

In the end, not only could I only take a bath once a week, a time limit of 5 minutes was also imposed on me.

As such, there was no way I could dilly dally in washing my body.

Well, even so, I was grateful because being able to take a bath was still considered a luxury.

“Despite such, Lady Eliane, your hair is very beautiful. As the same sex, I’m jealous.”

“Is that so?”

“Even before you took a bath, it already looked immensely beautiful. But now, your hair resembles fine-quality jewels strewn around... now, you can go meet His Highness the King with confidence.”

“T, thank you very much.”

For the first time, I was told that my hair was beautiful—

— *mumumu*...

As I thought, there were various odd things regarding my former livelihood as a saint...

“Me too, I also think that Abby is very beautiful.”

“Fufufu, flattery will get you nowhere...”

Even though I was being serious...

Abby also seemed to be the type who didn’t convey much through her facial expression...

...However, the smile she abruptly showed me looked super cute.

It made me want to pat her head—not like I could do that, though!

“Well, then, Lady Eliane, please change into this dress. I shall give you a hand.”

“Your help is appreciated.”

Saying that, Abby appeared with a beautiful white dress.

It was the type a queen would wear.

Wearing something like that... would that be alright?

I was confused, but I let Abby dress me up as I stood in front of the mirror—

—then.

“As I thought, you’re truly beautiful! Well, it’s said that a beauty will stay a beauty no matter what she wears... but you make even the dress look more beautiful, Lady Eliane!”

Abby said very excitedly.

Originally, I’d humbly say, *“No, that’s not true...”*

— but such wasn’t the case that time.

*T-that’s me!?*

It was as if I was reborn as a princess!

Abby also trimmed my hair. In front of the mirror, it was as if I was exuding my own radiance!

*It’s as if I’m not looking at myself...*

“What’s wrong, Lady Eliane? Do, do you not like the dress!?”

Perhaps because I stood in a daze, Abby looked a little panicked.

Therefore, I immediately shook my hand in front of my face.

“T, that’s not it! Thank you for the wonderful dress. I was just moved, that’s all!”

“If that is the truth, then I’m relieved.”

*Get a grip, me!*

*I was utterly moved, I was at loss for words...*

Back in my former kingdom, I was told against attending dance parties, therefore I have almost never donned dresses—

only once or twice, at max.

But that was a long time ago.

Claude didn't let me attend dance parties. I am sure he at that time was already infatuated with Leticia, therefore he didn't care about me.

Ah... the more I remembered Claude, the angrier I got.

I must forget about him.

"Even so, is it okay for a commoner like me to receive an audience with His Highness the King?"

Since I was also a saint, back when I was still in the Kingdom of Verclain, I often met with His Highness the King—but no one should know about that.

After I asked so anxiously,

"What are you talking about? I've heard from my Lord—you're his benefactor. We're the ones who should be humble."

"Is that how it is...?"

"Besides, His Highness the King treats commoners and the aristocrats equally. Even if you're a commoner, there shouldn't be a problem."

Abby encouraged me.

"I see..."

But I couldn't help but worry—

— *am I nervous?*

After all, I was about to meet the King of a kingdom. If I somehow behaved uncouthly, I didn't know what would happen to me.

"Lady Eliane, excuse me..."

Perhaps feeling my anxiety, Abby hugged me—

— *mugyu.*

"...!"

Due to its abruptness, I unconsciously leaned to Abby.

“You don’t have to worry about anything. Moreover, you’re a very beautiful person, His Highness the King will be surprised— *‘how did my son managed to encounter such a beautiful woman!’...*”

“A, Abby, you’re crushing me...”

“Forgive me.”

Abby quickly released me.

Her countenance reverted back to that of an iron mask.

“Alright then, Lord Nigel should be returning, soon. If you still feel uneasy, I’ll hug you again.”

“I, I’m fine, thank you!”

“That’s good.”

Thanks to her, some of my tension was relieved.

Abby... even though she looked young, she seemed to be a fairly competent maid.

If such was indeed the case, I felt I could relax and have an audience with His Highness the King—

—from the bottom of my heart, I believed so.

# Chapter 11

## An Audience with His Highness

—Thus, the audience with His Highness the King.

“For saving my son, Nigel, I express my gratitude to you.”

So said Nigel’s Father, or to be exact, *the King*.

“Thank you for your kind words.”

I bowed and replied.

However.

“There’s no need to be so formal, you’re Nigel’s benefactor, after all. Behave as you usually do.”

Said the King, sounding very thoughtful.

*Well, even if he said that, there’s no way I could oblige!*

After all, he was the *King* of that kingdom. After learning Nigel was the prince, I was already reluctant to discard my formality in the way I referred to him.

But, as I thought, resistance was futile.

“—However, Nigel.”

“Yes?”

Nigel, who stood beside me, responded.

“What a wonderful lady! Her conduct is gracious—as expected of the lady you’ve taken interest of.”

“Thank you.”

When I was still a saint, etiquette had been drilled into me. My education had been stern.

Even now, I was secretly quivering— *was my curtsy alright?* I was terrified of offending the king.

“I will immediately prepare a reward. What is it that you want? Tell me what you’d like.”

“Thank you for your concern.”

I actually intended to refuse, “—*no! There’s no need for that!*” But that would be considered offensive, wouldn’t it?

Therefore, I accepted it obediently.

Even though it seemed like I could ask for anything, if my demand was too immense, I would instead receive backlash.

That was why.

“If it isn’t too much, can you prepare a residence for me to live in the city?”

“A residence?”

“Yes, as a healer, I’ve been traveling for a while. But, I’ve made up my mind to settle down. This is my first time visiting Lynchgiham, and it’s a very good place—so I’d like to settle here if possible...”

“I see. If that’s what you desire, I’ll help as much as I can. Not just residency, but neither do you need to worry over your living expenses. But is that really enough?”

“Yes.”

“Not only beautiful, you’re also humble—I’m liking you more and more.”

*Hooray!*

As for a ‘place of residence’, which was my immediately obstacle, I thought we could solve it eventually.

More importantly, it seemed that I hadn’t compromised His Highness the King’s mood...!

Therefore, wouldn’t it yield a good result?!

“...”

But when I stared beside me, Nigel looked lonely.



But why?

“I will say it once more—you were truly a great help. I thank you on behalf of my kingdom. I’d like to investigate the Behemoth thoroughly, which is probably still prowling around. However, that shouldn’t be of your concern anymore.”

In my previous kingdom, I heard Lynchgiham only possessed a minor military power.

It seemed that its low taxes were used to improve the living standard of its citizens.

Their decision was described by Claude as a mere, ‘folly’.

But, as of the present, I didn’t think so.

Each kingdom had its own way of ruling.

But was it possible for Lynchgiham to subdue the Behemoth?

It may be good to erect a magical barrier on the whole city later...

...but, if I preformed such a large-scale magical operation, I’d get found out right away.

*Alright, let’s think about that after this audience is over.*

“Eliane, forgive me for saying this, but I have one request.”

“Yes?”

The King continued speaking to me in a humble manner.

“Actually, I have a pet in the castle. Recently, it has been sick. I hear you’re a good healer, so if you don’t mind...”

“Your Highness!”

Nigel broke conduct and raised his voice as if to interrupt the King’s story.

Because this was a formal event, he’d referred to the King as ‘His Majesty’ instead of ‘Father’.

“Eliane is a guest, isn’t it rude to request that of her?”

“Well... no matter which healer sees him, Ralph doesn’t recover, that’s why...”

Oh, his pet’s name was ‘Ralph’—how cute.

There was anger in Nigel’s words.

Despite the fact that Nigel’s Father was the king of the kingdom, I truly thought he was a sincere person who cared about my cause.

However.

“Lord Nigel.”

As I thought, I just couldn’t discard the formalities.

“I find no problem with it.”

“B-but!”

“I was allowed to take a bath and also to wear such a lovely dress. On the other hand, I love animals. If an animal suffers from an illness, it’s not like I can ignore it.”

“I see, you’re a very kind person, I understand. Alright then, I’m sorry, but please lend us your aid.”

Nigel sighed as if he had given up.

“Your Highness, I can’t guarantee you that I can cure it, but is it okay if I see your pet immediately?”

“Of course, thank you.”

Even so, I wondered what kind of pet it was...

A dog? Cat? Birds and fishes were also possible.

As it turned out, I was too naïve.

His Highness’ pet was beyond my imagination...

# Chapter 12

## It was Fluffy

I went with the King and Nigel to a garden within the castle grounds.

“Eh...”

Then I saw something ridiculous.

“F, *Fenrir*!?”

Indeed.

A huge Fenrir covered in green was laying on the green garden.

“By ‘pet’, you mean that Fenrir-?!”

“Exactly—didn’t I tell you before?”

“You didn’t—!”

...Really, this father and son were both brief in their explanation.

Fenrir was a kind of demon.

However, it was a relatively friendly monster. Even if it saw a human, it wouldn’t attack the innocent.

It would be a different matter if said human showed hostility.

As such, some people kept them as pets...

In the first place, unless the Fenrir himself acknowledged the person as his ‘Master’, a pact wouldn’t happened.

Fenrir were also costly to buy, therefore mere commoners wouldn’t be able to afford it.

For that reason, it wasn’t unusual that the King was able to keep a Fenrir, but...

“It seems that it isn’t feeling well...”

I was worried about the Fenrir.

“Indeed, it is as I’ve said. No matter which healer came to see him, Ralph never showed any improvement...”

Ralph... such was the Fenrir’s name.

“I see. Well, I’ll see to him at once.”

I tried to approach the Fenrir.

However, Nigel immediately seized me.

“Eliane, let me come with you.”

“Ara?”

“Ralph doesn’t really like people. As such, he might attack you. You also mustn’t touch his body carelessly—however, if we go together...”

Of course, the Fenrir was familiar with Nigel—

—however.

“I will be fine. After all, he’s so cute, why wouldn’t he let me touch him?”

“E, Eliane-!”

Without listening to Nigel’s protests, I proudly approached the Fenrir.

“What a cute child...”

When I conversed to him, the Fenrir said nothing and only glanced at me.

He didn’t even answer... it seemed that his symptoms were severe...

“Excuse me then...!”

I had never touched a Fenrir before.

I never had the chance—but even so, I didn’t think I’d get bitten.

*Because it looks so cute!*

I was already on cloud nine when I touched the soft fur.

Even when I hugged his large body, he accepted me gently.

“Waa...”

My expectation was correct—the Fenrir was very fluffy!

It felt good...

“Fluffy...! *Ha—!* No, no, I almost forget my original purpose...”

I’ll cure you soon.

I concentrated and applied healing magic to the Fenrir.

“Wow! What a divine light!”

I heard the voice of the King from behind me.

Hmm...

Quite a troublesome disease that was...

When I concentrated and used healing magic, I could see the aura of the opponent.

A healthy aura would be colorless and transparent.

The more vivid the color and the cloudier it was, the worse the symptoms.

...Fenrir’s aura was a cloudy red?

Just a mere glance of his aura already caused me unease.

“It’s the first time I’ve ever seen an aura of this color...”

I was befuddled, but I continued my treatment.

Then, the red aura gradually approached one colorlessness and transparency.

Eventually—

“—I’m finished. I think he’ll be fine.”

I completed the treatment of Fenrir and turned around to report to the King and Nigel.

“I, it’s over?!”

The King sounded amazed.

Nigel was also stunned.

“Yes. Hey, Fenrir— *Ralph-chan*, you can move already, right?”

I spoke gently.

Then, Fenrir, Ralph-chan, slowly stood up on the spot.

However, I wondered if it was because he had been resting for too long, Ralph-chan was a little wobbly.

“*Ara*, please be careful.”

I supported Ralph without any delay.

*Waaa... too fluffy...*

It felt too good.

I wondered if Ralph had regained his senses.

It didn’t take long before he was able to stand without my support.

“W, what a sight! So many healers have attempted to heal him, only to no avail! But Ralph was restored in such a short time?!”

“It’s been a while since I’ve seen Ralph standing, and for Ralph to let someone he has only just met to touch him so casually—!”

The situation surprised them further.

*If it’s only this, it’s easy, ahem.*

Through healing magic, I had healed the Fenrir’s—Ralph-chan’s—illness.

“You’re a quiet boy, aren’t you?”

I gently stroked Ralph’s fur.

*Hmm, as I thought, Fenrir is the best!*

First of all, he felt good to touch!

Nigel said Ralph disliked other people, but I didn’t think so.

Despite my touching, I didn't think he'd resist me.

After enjoying Ralph's fur for a while—

*"It tickles."*

I heard Ralph-chan's voice.

*"Ara, you can talk after all."*

*"!?"*

Ralph looked surprised when I responded.

*"You.... You can hear Ralph's voice?"*

*"Of course I can, I am a 'healer', after all."*

I laughed— *kusukusu...*

*"Eliane? Who are you talking to?"*

Nigel beckoned to me—

— *huh...? Oops!*

Unlike ordinary people, I could understand the voices of demons and animals.

I was too excited talking with the Fenrir, I forgot about that.

*"Uh, uhm... as a healer, I need to be mindful of both demons and animals..."*

*"...I see?"*

*"Since I'm an experienced healer, I'm able to converse with both demons and animals—in short, I was talking to Ralph-chan."*

*"What!?"*

Instead of Nigel, the one who let out such surprised voice was His Highness the King.

*"Ms. Eliane is able to do that?!"*

*"Y, yes."*

“So, what did Ralph say? Can you please convey to him that I’m sorry for letting him suffer such an illness?”

“Ah, even if I’m the only one who can decipher what Ralph-chan is saying, he can understand what Your Highness the King said just fine. Isn’t it so, Ralph-chan?”

I glanced at Ralph—

—then.

*“Of course. I can understand him just fine. Therefore, I must reassure him.”*

Ralph replied—

*— only I can understand you, though.*

*“He needn’t worry about the illness any longer. I know that despite his business, he still desperately tried to tend to me.*

*Not only I am grateful to him, I don’t bare any ill will towards him.”*

“U, umm, he said to not worry, and that he’s grateful because you’ve taken care of him.”

I conveyed Ralph’s intention to the King.

“ O, oooh...! That’s good! Indeed, if Ralph said so, then I am relieved...”

The King looked happy.

Apparently, he was thoroughly impressed with my ability to communicate with Ralph-chan.

“...”

*Jiii...*

Nigel was staring intently at me.

*Acha...* those eyes were suspecting me.

“U, uhm! If you don’t mind, may I pet Ralph?! It has always been my dream to get along with a Fenrir!”



As a form of distraction, I requested such of the King.

Anyways! I shall thoroughly discuss that again with them later! Right now, changing the topic was my utmost priority!

“Of course, it’s fine. Well, as long as Ralph is alright with it...”

*“I’m alright with it. You’re Ralph’s benefactor. If you like, I’d even let you ride me.”*

“W, will that be fine!?”

Suddenly, I uttered a loud voice as well.

“Well then, excuse me...”

When I showed the motion as if was about to ride him, Ralph-chan crouched on spot.

He was thoughtful.

With my height, there was no way I could get on Ralph’s back if he didn’t do so.

Then, I plopped on Ralph’s back.

“Waaa...!”

When Ralph-chan stood up slowly, I saw a view I had never perceived before.

*It’s almost as though I’ve changed places!*

Looking at the scenery from such a height, it felt refreshing...

*“Alright then, let’s go. Be sure to not fall off!”*

“U, uhm, please be gentle.”

Although Ralph said so, he was mindful of me and gently walked around the garden.

“...After hearing what you said before, I totally didn’t expect such a gentle pace.”

*“I was just joking around.”*

Ralph said bluntly.

Due to the height, I was a little scared...

However, probably because I felt such a sense of security from Ralph-chan, I experienced more fun than fear.

Even if I fell, I was sure Ralph-chan would help me...

“T, that Ralph, who has never let anyone ride him! Eliane seems to be compatible with Fenrir, ahahaha!”

The King, although surprised, laughed again.

I had no choice but to laugh with him.

“Nigel, don’t you think so too?”

“Y, yes... I thought she was just an excellent healer, but it turned out that she’s so much more... It seems that we need to raise Eliane’s reputation.”

Although Nigel was being accommodating to the King, it seemed like his suspicion regarding me hadn’t cleared yet.

*A man who’s too nitpicky isn’t popular, you know—*

—well, not like I could say it out loud.

# Chapter 14

## The Cause of the Illness

Afterwards,

Once I was satisfied with the fluffiness of Ralph's fur, I decided to return to Nigel and the King.

"Your Highness, do you have any idea for what ailed Ralph?"

I asked the King.

Then, the King turned stern, *'Hmm...'*

"—I don't know. At first, I thought he had a mild cold. However, he gradually grew weaker—neither potion nor magic could heal him. I had almost given up—I have no idea what in the world happened..."

I couldn't hide my confusion.

As a saint, I had healed many people and animals.

However, as for that muddy aura... I had one inkling—

—it was a curse.

A strong grudge against others made it possible to curse someone.

Depending on the curse, those who had been afflicted by it would show various symptoms. Ralph-chan had shown those exact symptoms.

If his illness was indeed caused by a curse, we'd be in trouble.

That was because curses couldn't be cured by just any healing magic.

There were only two ways to break a curse.

The first was with the aid of someone from an uncommon profession called The Curser.

While the second was through the saint who is protected by the goddess... which was me.

Although it meant it wasn't impossible to break a curse, there weren't many Cursers or Saints available. As such, once someone was cursed, it became troublesome.

"Your Highness."

"What is it?"

"It is but a guess, but..."

I told the King everything I had discovered healing Ralph.

"...I see, a curse, is it?"

Naturally, the King was aware of the troublesomeness of a curse. His face became distorted.

Because a curse would show varying symptoms, it'd be difficult to diagnose at the beginning.

That was why I said it was merely a guess.

"It isn't the final conclusion. However, the possibility is undeniable."

The King appeared astringent.

Even though it was a pet, it was *the King's* pet.

It was probably the work of those who bore hostility to the King.

Even then, why would Ralph-chan be cursed instead of the King?

— *was it an unfinished curse meant to latch upon someone?*

... Alright, I must stop there.

It'd be better to leave the matter to the King.

"Well then, should we put an end to this gloomy conversation?"

The King clapped his hands several times to change the topic.

"Eliane, stay here for the night. Preparing a place for you to live in the city will take some time."

"Would that be alright with you?"

"Of course, although it might be possible that the room prepared for

you is too large, but...”

I was thinking of staying at an inn, but honestly, this worked, too.

The money I brought from my former kingdom was very small. I had to be frugal.

“Is Lord Nigel alright with this suggestion?”

“I welcome Eliane very much, too. You can stay overnight as you like.”

Nigel seemed to agree with the King’s proposal.

“If that’s the case, I graciously accept your offer.”

I bowed deeply.

# Chapter 15

## A Talk with the Dragon

□ This chapter is from the perspective of the Knight Leader, whom remained in the kingdom

“Kuh...! So it has come to this...!”

A dragon had appeared above the royal capital—the moment the Knight Leader, Klaus, heard the news, such was his response.

“This happened because he exiled the Saint...”

That spoiled brat, what could he be thinking!?

The Saint, Eliane, had put up a barrier to ward off evil.

Thanks to that, the kingdom had continued to prosper.

Originally, that kingdom was surrounded by dungeons, and recently, a dragon’s nest had been sighted in the vicinity.

Despite living in such a location, everyone had enjoyed peace until then all because of the Saint.

“Even so, that prince...!”

He wanted to curse—however, there was no point in blaming him, now.

He could blame Claude all he wanted, but Eliane wouldn’t return.

It became clear how much they had depended on the Saint.

Klaus slapped his cheeks and regained his spirit.

“Knight Leader! There’s something odd about the appearance of the dragon!”

A subordinate approached him.

“Odd’?”

“Yes, it’s as if he wants to say something to us...”

Upon hearing the report of his subordinate, Klaus widened his eyes.

“...I shall go. Even if it turns into a battle, at least there’d be only one casualty...”

“But, Knight Leader, heading there alone, that’s just outrageous!”

“I’ll be fine. Dragon are an intelligent race. If I negotiate, he might think that fighting the kingdom now isn’t a good idea...”

...In all actuality, that was a fleeting hope.

If the dragon was serious, the kingdom would be completely eradicated. Not only that, a lot of people would die.

That was why he had no choice but take the path of negotiation rather than combat.

“Not to mention, if I bring along several subordinates, I might fail to convince the dragon that we bear no harm.

Therefore, I need to go alone.”

“B, but, it’s just too dangerous!”

“I’ve devoted my life to the kingdom and the King. In a way, I’m risking myself for the kingdom’s safety.”

He shrugged his shoulders.

That was why, even when he heard Eliane was leaving, he chose to remain there.

“Still... if the negotiation fails, send a signal. We shall then send reinforcements!”

“Yes!”

After seeing his men salute him, Klaus went to the castle’s roof.

In the capital, that was the highest place.

“So that’s a dragon...!”

The dragon was flying in the sky.

His body was tremendously huge, it completely covered the sky.

“O, Dragon! What are you trying to convey!?”

Klaus beckoned towards the dragon.

*Girori...*

The dragon's eyes spotted Klaus.

Even one of its eyes was larger than Klaus' body.

A feeling of intimidation burned through Klaus' skin. He wanted to flee right then and there.

However, despite his trembling feet, he kept his posture and never once looked away from the dragon.

*“Are you the representative of the people... I see, I feel the aura of a strong man, something unusual for a human being.*

*You're therefore eligible to speak with me.”*

It was as if the dragon spoke directly into his head—Klaus experienced such strange sensation.

It was said that intelligent dragons could converse through the mind.

*It's my first time talking to a dragon...*

He mustn't show any sign of timidity.

*“I only have one question—where did the Saint go?”*

Upon being asked so, Klaus didn't comprehend the question at first.

*... Should I lie?*

Since he was a dragon, he should know that it was the work of the Saint who erected the barrier around the kingdom. It wasn't strange for him to know.

However, honestly answering, *‘the Saint has been exiled from the kingdom,’* was straight up foolish.

Despite so, Klaus couldn't discover any opportunities to launch an attack, either.

At the same time, there was also a high chance his lie would be found



out.

If it was revealed he was lying, there was no guarantee the dragon wouldn't harm him.

"T, the Saint..."

Klaus desperately squeezed the words out.

"The Saint is gone."

"Gone... as in?"

The eyes of the dragon turned sharp.

*"When I saw that the barrier of this kingdom has disappeared, I became concerned... but, the Saint is gone? Do you know what exactly that means?"*

"...!"

*"It seems that you're well aware of the situation."*

The dragon let out a sigh.

*"The Saint is my benefactor. I live alone in my nest, and we used to converse through telepathy. I heard that she was being mistreated by the people of her own kingdom..."*

The dragon continued as if he had realized something.

*"For the Saint to just disappear like this, this kingdom's over, I'm sure. But she's a gentle saint, it's unlike her—*

*—therefore, I come to conclude that someone has driven her out of the kingdom. Like this, the reason for her disappearance is understandable."*

"T, that's..."

He wanted to argue immediately.

But he couldn't.

Through the words of Klaus alone, the dragon had already guessed Saint Eliane's predicament.

It was useless for Klaus to lie now for he'd surely get found out.

*“Are you Klaus, the Knight Leader whom Saint once told me about?”*

“Y, yes! That’s me, Klaus!”

*“Hoo, I see, from what I’ve heard from the Saint, not only are you very handsome, you’re also very kind.”*

*“Very handsome?”*

What had the Saint been telling the dragon?

*“Rest assured, in the first place, I only came to observe the situation. I have no intention of destroying this kingdom.”*

“Is that true?!”

Klaus was relieved.

It appeared that the dragon hadn’t intended to attack them.

*Then, this might work...*

But, to Klaus, who thought so—

*“—However, the people who’ve banished the Saint must be punished! Klaus, those who’ve oppressed the Saint, those imbeciles who have exiled the Saint... tell me their names!”*

The dragon roared.

“!!!”

Klaus unconsciously retreated back.

*It’s Prince Claude... but I mustn’t tell, for I am the sword and the shield which protect the king and the prince... but, telling a lie to this dragon, that’s...*

He was trying to come up with something at high speed.

*“Haa...”*

But the dragon was quicker.

*“The one who oppressed the Saint, is it Claude?”*

“Wha-!?”

*“As a knight leader, you’ve performed your duty as the shield and the sword of the king well. No matter how much I stared at you, Klaus, you didn’t buckle.”*

Then, the dragon flew away.

“It, it’s leaving?”

*Wrong.*

Although the dragon could no longer be seen, his presence could still be felt. The dragon should still be in the capital.

“So, it turns out he can read mind... as I thought, lying was a bad idea to lie.”

Before Klaus noticed, he had already crumbled onto the floor, losing all his strength.

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In the castle.

“*Umu*, it has been a while since I assumed the form of a human. As I thought, it’s still difficult to move. Alright, shall I begin the punishment?”

A dragon, assuming the form of a man around 20 years of age, was invading the castle.

# Chapter 16

## I did say I don't Need a Large Room, Right?

I was again reminded of the number one habit belonging to both the father and son: skimping on explanations.

“Isn't this room too spacious!?”

Abby was the one who guided me to that room.

After she had closed the door, I went wide agape.

“Did you escort me to the dance hall, instead?!”

Yes.

The room prepared for me was ridiculously large.

Not only that—

—a bed with a canopy... I had only ever seen one in a fairy tale book... not to mention, wasn't it too big for me to sleep in alone!?

There were high-quality vases and paintings everywhere... how was I supposed to sleep peacefully in such a place?

The room had also been tidied up properly, which seemed to be the reason why the room appeared to be shining.

I never asked for such a spacious room! A room consisting of a wooden table, a desk, and a solid bed—even if the place was narrow and damp, would suffice for me!

It wasn't like I didn't welcome the offer... but...

Such a large room, how was I supposed to calm down?

A room that could shield me from the rain and the wind was enough...

“...They're just trying to be hospitable, I guess.”

I approached the bed and tried pushing it with my finger.

*Waaah! So fluffy and soft!*

I then lied down on the scary bed.

I felt lacking in elegance, for I performed such an action while still wearing my outerwear. But I couldn't resist the fluffy temptation...

"A lot has happened ever since I was exiled, indeed..."

Gazing at the white ceiling, I recalled what happened so far.

Banished by Prince Claude... the annulment of my engagement...

It was hard to process.

"But... what am I going to do now?"

I had acquired a place to live.

That alone had resolved my biggest concern.

However, people couldn't live by themselves.

In order to live, I needed to earn a living.

In short—money.

I brought a small amount of money with me, and it'll run out soon.

I had to find a place to work before that happens.

"Shall I go to the medical center for employment? I can use healing magic, after all."

But I immediately shook my head.

"No can do. If I did that, my identity as the saint will be exposed instantly. Then... a bakery? I yearn to work for one, but I wonder if I can serve customers well. I like cooking, then, a restaurant, maybe..."

*Nnn... for me to start doubting myself at this point...*

Who would hire this me who had poor social experiences and no other abilities other than that of a saint?

*...tough.*

"Well, let's think about that later... I really want to sleep, my head is

really befuddled...”

My eyelids grew heavier—

“—Eliane, can I have a moment?”

I heard a knock.

It was Nigel. I leaped off the bed immediately.

“Y, yes! Please wait!”

I couldn’t show Nigel my messy appearance!

I immediately went to the mirror, tidied my hair with a comb, and opened the door.

“I’m sorry for intruding your rest time...”

“There’s no problem. But, what happened, Nigel? Could it be... you wanted to see me?”

My heart went aflutter, but I still made a joke with an elegant smile.

Under my gaze, Nigel’s face turned red.

“N, not like that... I just want to talk to you, Eliane.”

He steadily answered.

*Huh?*

Since it was Nigel, whom was usually playful, I thought his answer was going to be, *“Haha, indeed, I wanted to see Eliane’s face badly.”*

Wasn’t that how he usually is? It was hard to see through his jokes and his flattery...

What happened to him?

My words incited such a reaction from him...

...for a moment, it was as if he was a cute dog.

“...So, what do you want to talk about?”

If I pester him further, I’d feel bad. Thus, I cut straight to the point.

“...It’s difficult to have a conversation here. Nearby, there’s a balcony, why not speak there?”

“Well, no problem with me...”

I wondered what was it.

Judging from his expression, it didn’t seem to be for mere chitchat.

...It might be something upsetting.

A bit anxiously, I followed Nigel.

# Chapter 17

## I got Found out

Through Nigel's invitation, I went to the balcony.

"Wow, what a nice view!"

I approached the fence and saw the cityscape.

Since a magical device of lightning was used to stably light up the night, people were able to work without problems.

By the way, people called the energy created by the magical device, 'electricity'... Even though the night was getting deeper, there were electric lights all over the city.

It was as if diamonds had been scattered around the city.

The night scenery of my former kingdom was beautiful, but Lynchgiham's may be even more so.

When I was looking at such a scenery, such were my thoughts.

While I was admiring the view of Lynchgiham—

"—what do you think? This is my beloved city, Lynchgiham. It took a while to get here, but thanks to the cooperation of the citizens, we were able to develop this far. It's pretty good."

Nigel proudly said.

"You're right—it's truly beautiful."

"To hear that from Eliane, I'm happy."

Nigel stood next to me.

His profile, ridden with melancholy, was too fascinating for women—including me.

"Eliane, are you aware of *a certain tradition* in the neighboring Kingdom of Verclaim?"

*Doki!*



The name of my former kingdom was mentioned. I was so surprised, I almost jumped.

“Tradition? What could it be?”

I asked Nigel, pretending to be calm.

“In that kingdom, there’s a *saint*.”

*Doki, doki.*

“...A saint?”

“Indeed. Said saint seems to be responsible in erecting barriers and warding evil from approaching the kingdom. Thanks to that saint, the kingdom has continued to prosper, and became an incredibly powerful kingdom...”

“A saint—that’s the first I’ve ever heard of it. I thought them merely mythical creatures, ones belonging to a fairy tales of some sort.”

The elderly would know about the saint. However, it wasn’t very well communicated amongst the young people.

*People have started to believe that the figure of the saint is a mere formality, and that there’s no way one could actually erect a barrier to protect an entire kingdom...*

... or so they thought.

Moreover, I never thought Nigel would believe in that tradition.

I listened to Nigel’s conversation while maintaining my composure.

“Furthermore, the saint also has the healing power, one which can heal all kinds of diseases and injuries for the sake of the people. The saint who received the protection of the goddess is beautiful, and people have been in love with her for many years.”

“T, that’s but a superstition... there’s no way such a person exists...”

Eh, eh—!

Why would Nigel start talking about the saint?!

Could it be...

“Be honest with me, Eliane.”

He stared at my face.

“You are that saint, aren’t you?”

He asked me so.

“—!”

I almost sputtered for a moment.

*What do I do noooow!?*

I thought I had managed to avert the crisis regarding my healing the Fenrir, Ralph-chan, but Nigel realized after all!?

I immediately wanted to interject— “—no, I am not.” But no words would come out!

Seeing my reaction, Nigel sighed.

“...It seems that my guess is correct.”

Only then could I let out a sound.

“T, that’s...”

“You don’t have to pretend anymore. In the first place, after Eliane joined us and we went back to Lynchgiham, during the entire trip, we hardly encounter any demons even though many monsters live in that area. That was the work of Eliane’s barrier, correct?”

*Ahh... this was inevitable. As I thought, it backfired...*

At that time.

Even though it was possible to ward off all the demons, I thought that would be too suspicious. So, I set my barrier so that weak demons could still approach.

“Furthermore, not only healing us who were injured by Behemoth, Ralph, the Fenrir, was also completely cured. For a mere healer to be able to use such grandiose healing—that’s outrageous.”

“A, actually, I’m a very good healer, I apologize for hiding that, but that’s it—”

“— *Eliane*.”

“H, *hyiii!*”

Nigel’s eyes pierced me.

It was so immersive, I could be sucked in. As I stared at him, I was unable to respond.

“That’s not the extent of it. I’ve also confirmed your identity.”

“G, *good job!* You’ve violated a maiden’s privacy!”

“This time, it was urgent. If you really are the saint, the Kingdom of Verclaim and Lynchgiham may end up colliding.

Once that happens, war would be inevitable. I’m a member of the royal family, I’m responsible for the people. There’s a limit to my indulgence. I’m sorry that I secretly investigate you.”

Nigel bowed deeply.

However.

“P, please don’t apologize! I was merely joking! Of course, it’s only obvious you’d investigate a dubious person like me!

As a member of the royal family, that’s only natural!”

I hurriedly told Nigel to raise his head.

“Thank you for forgiving me.”

However, his pursuit didn’t stop.

“I was surprised when I discovered your true identity. It was just beyond my expectations...”

“...”

“No matter how much I think about it, this is just too strange. For you to be a saint... Hey, Eliane, for me, and above all, for this kingdom, do tell me the truth.”

...I couldn’t lie anymore.

“I understand. I am indeed the saint of that kingdom.”

“A, as I thought...”

After some thought, I confessed.

Nigel widened his eyes.

“Why is the saint of that kingdom in such a place as this?”

“That’s...”

I explained everything to Nigel.

Prince Claude hadn’t only broken his engagement with me but had also exiled me.

To quit being a saint and live my life for once, I went to Lynchgiham.

I could’ve just lied. But before Nigel, I found myself unable to do so.

I told Nigel without concealing anything. The entire time, I gazed straight into his eyes.

“H, how can that be...!? What is the prince of Verclaim thinking!? To exile the saint who possesses such tremendous power! Moreover, he also annulled the engagement!?”

After he heard my explanation, Nigel was upset.

Seeing his reaction, I felt glad.

However.

“I apologize for lying. I will leave this kingdom soon. I won’t be a hindrance to you.”

I apologized properly.

...Right when I thought I had finally found a place I could settle down... so it turned out, I had to leave soon.

Where should I go next?

If I got found out again, I would have to leave again.

However, in order for me to keep living, I had to lie. I had to fool people.

...I vaguely realized.

Perhaps, I no longer had anywhere to go.

Perhaps, the world no longer had a place for me.

“...Eliane, what are you going to do, now?”

To me, whom was at a loss, Nigel inquired.

“...I, I want to find a place where I can settle down. I don't have to be rich, being poor is alright, too... I just want a place where I can live in peace... that's all...”

“Is Lynchgiham not good enough?”

“Of course, Lynchgiham is the best... but, if I stay here, I will end up becoming a nuisance.”

I no longer had anything to do with Claude.

But that didn't guarantee we wouldn't cross paths in the future.

“...Well then, Eliane, you should stay here.”

“Huh?”

What he said was unexpected.

“To the royal family of Lynchgiham, these words are passed down;

*‘Reach out when there are people in need. No matter what difficulties it may yield, you mustn't forsake people in need easily.’*

If the word came out that I had shooed a supposed country girl away, Father and the citizens would get angry.”

“B, but I am not a citizen of Lynchgiham.”

“Didn't Father say he'd prepare a place for you to live? Then you're already one of us.”

I didn't know such kindness existed.

It had been awhile since I had been treated with such kindness, I was about to cry.

“Not to mention, the reason you're here in the first place is because he has one-sidedly exiled you, right? Then the answer should be clear.”

“B, but still...”

“Do you think Lynchgiham is such a small kingdom, it can’t fit even one saint?”

“...It’s not like that.”

“Then, why not stay here? The only one who will know your real identity is me, and His Highness the King. I want you to please overlook that.”

As he was the prince, that was only a natural move to make.

In addition, if he didn’t relay the information to the king, they wouldn’t be able to intercept any unexpected situations that may happen in the future.

“Alright, then.”

“That’s good.”

“But... is it really alright for me to stay in this kingdom? I won’t be a hindrance or anything?”

“Hindrance? Why, there’s no such a thing... and, starting from here, it’ll be a personal conversation.”

Nigel’s gaze turned even more serious as he said;

“—I want to spend more time with you.”

# Chapter 18

## If you are That Passionate, I'll Panic

"H, h, huh—!?"

Due to Nigel's sudden words, I let out a strange voice.

As my thought blanked, Nigel grabbed my shoulders.

"From the moment I saw you, I was smitten by your beauty. There's no need for you to use healing magic—there's also no need for you to be a saint, either. I just want you to stay by my side!"

"W, wait a minute, Lord Nigel!"

I interjected loudly.

Due to my panic, the way I referred to him went back to formal...

Surprised by my loud voice—

"—! Forgive me, I was a little excited. I'm sorry for coming off too strong just now."

He returned to his original nature.

"I, it's fine... as a member of the royal family, you must've been taught how to flatter a woman. But I don't think you should say those things, especially in a situation like this. I'm afraid I'll end up misunderstanding things..."

After all, back in my kingdom, there was a saying that went, '*When you meet a woman, your first sentence should be a compliment.*'

As such, I strongly reminded myself that I mustn't misunderstand Nigel's words.

"I never intended to mislead you..."

"Huh? You never intended to what?"

"Never mind."

Nigel cleared his throat before continuing his explanation.

“I truly meant it when I said I want you to remain here. We’ve only known each other for a short while, but I know you’re a very fascinating woman. What do you think, Eliane? If you like it, I’d like for you to remain in Lynchgiham forever.”

Looking straight into his eyes made me lose my pace.

This might be troubling...

...however, I was appealed to so passionately—

—it seemed that the answer was indeed obvious.

“I understand. True to your words, I shall stay in Lynchgiham for a time being. Thank you very much.”

I bowed again.

I made sure to include ‘*for a time being*’. After all, I couldn’t bother such good people. Should I feel a little threatened, I shall depart from Lynchgiham—I swore that to myself.

“I should be the one to thank you. Thank you—I’m so glad to hear that.”

When I raised my head, Nigel was showing an elegant smile.

Today was full moon.

The moonlight shining on Nigel highlighted his beauty.

“...On the other hand.”

Nigel raised an index finger.

“Eliane, what are you going to do? As my Father said, a place will be prepared for you.”

“I haven’t decided yet. I’m just going to find a job somewhere and live quietly.”

“I see... If that’s what Eliane wants, it’s good, then. But, if you don’t mind, why not stay here for a while?”

“Hee?”

When I was told something unexpected, I let out another stupid voice.



“Forgive my bluntness, but... If a pretty girl like you suddenly enters the city, there may be a lot of troubles waiting for you. So how about staying here until you’ve become more acclimated to your surroundings? It’s not always possible to find a place to live immediately.”

What a very attractive proposition.

If a girl like me, who could only use some healing magic, was immediately thrown into the rough waves of society—

would I be able to succeed?

There was also the possibility I might lost sight of myself.

However.

“Thank you very much, but is that truly a good thing?”

“What is?”

“For you to treat me this impressively well—won’t you attract criticism from others?”

“What kind of criticism? It’s a well-known fact that your healing magic has saved us. Isn’t this the most natural treatment towards a benefactor?”

Nigel wondered, “What are you worried about?”

Thus, I didn’t think there was any reason to decline.

“I understand. However, I will feel guilty if I don’t do anything. Iif there’s anything I can help, please don’t hesitate to ask it of me.”

“You’re truly a good person. I see, if your power is needed, I shall inform you.”

I wanted to relax for a while, however, if I had nothing to do, I would only be a bother to everyone.

*Am I a workaholic...?*

... maybe because back when I was a saint, my duties were basically endless.

In any case.

“Then, I’ll say this—I’ll be in your care.”

“Likewise.”

Nigel said happily.

“Let’s go home now. Sorry for keeping you up until this late. I’ll escort you to your room.”

“No, it’s fine. If you do that and you’re witnessed by others, I won’t know what to say, so...”

“You worry too much about others—it’ll be fine.”

Nigel grabbed my hand as I tried to withdraw alone.

“I will escort you.”

Nigel’s smile was akin to a flower.

I wondered, what got into him...

# Chapter 19

## Nigel's Feeling

\*Told from the perspective of Nigel.

*When was the last time I had fallen for someone?*

Nigel had been thinking so ever since his exchange with Eliane.

It was no good. No matter what kind of woman he looked at it, he just couldn't fall in love.

Even so, there were times when he tried to be 'loved', and patiently talked to women several times.

But... in the end, it stayed the same.

*Even though they looked happy, for some reason, my heart felt empty and I was not satisfied...*

However, I was still a prince.

But having an amiable image about someone else alone wasn't enough of a reason for me to marry them.

Despite so, I wondered it would be like to feel, *'I want to get married with this person'!*

Then, I met Eliane.

When I first saw her, it was as if an electric shock ran throughout my body, I was astonished.

—what a beautiful person.

Since then, I had become strange.

Whenever I saw her, it was as if I was losing my senses.

Speaking with her, I became too excited.

It had only been a short time since I met Eliane, but such was my honest thought; *I want to spend more time with her.*

“My, what exactly is this feeling? It’s so unlike me.”

I remembered back to my conversation with her on that balcony.

As I thought, she was the saint of the neighboring kingdom.

I already felt something was weird when I saw her unusual healing magic.

...my suspicion became even more vivid when I found out she could communicate with Fenrir Ralph.

Fenrir wouldn’t let anyone they hadn’t acknowledged touch them.

Moreover, Ralph was special amongst his kind—no one beside my Father and I could touch him.

Due to that, feeding him was a strenuous activity for the servants.

Ralph didn’t let anyone touch his body easily, not even for healing.

But then, my Father and I saw an amazing sight—

—she approached Ralph, alone.

Contrary to expectations, Eliane easily patted Ralph.

Not only that, Ralph even let her ride him and they took a walk in the garden!

That surprised my Father and I. I was so amazed, I was at loss for words.

*Is that because she’s an excellent healer—*

*—or because she’s a saint?*

That wasn’t correct. Fenrir disliked people.

Fenrir was such a creature;

*“Fenrir possess noble souls. They will never open their hearts unless the other person has a pure heart.”*

To be able to get along with Ralph in one attempt, she must have possessed a pure heart.

I honestly thought so.

—Then I looked into her in more detail.

It was my role as a leading figure of the kingdom to uncover her nature, even if she was my benefactor. It was to prevent anything from happening.

However, part of me might have been confused—I ended up doing it more so because I wanted to, rather than because I was *obliged* to—

—I wanted to know more about her.

I was driven by such a personal feeling.

It was because she was an enigma.

High-level healing magic.

A heart that could win a Fenrir in one attempt.

Therefore, one thing was certain about her—

“You are that saint, aren’t you?”

Convinced, I confronted Eliane.

She tried to lie at first, but after some insistence, she confessed that she was indeed the saint.

When Eliane said she was going to leave Lynchgiham to prevent herself from being a hindrance, she looked as if she was about to cry.

Seeing that, I grew fonder of Eliane—

—I wanted to protect her.

I wanted to stay close to her.

Although she’d stay in Lynchgiham, she’ll be separated from me.

After all, I was the prince.

Once she left the royal palace, I wouldn’t be able to meet Eliane easily.

*I hate that!*

Before I realized it, I had already propositioned her to remain in the castle for a while.

Luckily, Eliane agreed with my suggestion.

*I'm glad...*

I didn't think I showed it on my face, but how relieved I was at that time!

"I want to converse more with her..."

After separating from Eliane, I lied on my back and reminisced.

"Haha, what has happened to me... this is the first I've ever been like this..."

I couldn't fall in love no matter what.

Therefore, I didn't understand the word 'love'.

*Maybe, this is what love is like?*

I couldn't sleep well that night because I couldn't comprehend myself.

# Chapter 20

## Even if I'm not Good with Waking up Early, I Still do so

A night passed.

“A lot of things happened yesterday...”

Remembering it all, it felt dreamlike.

Not only did Nigel say I could remain here for a while, I could also do as I please.

“...Maybe I should take a stroll around the castle?”

No... it might be troubling for them since I hadn't received official permission to do so.

Sitting on the bed, I pondered about today's schedule.

*Ton, ton.*

A knocking sound.

“Yes?”

“Excuse me.”

After I called out, Abby entered from the hallway.

“Good morning, Ms. Abby.”

“Good morning. You do wake up early, that's good.”

“I really want to sleep more, but it's already a habit.”

I laughed bitterly.

Back in my former kingdom, waking up early was a must because I had various tasks to perform.

Well, as of now, the only people who knew I was the saint were Nigel and the King. As such, I couldn't let it slip to Abby.

“So, what is it, Abby?”

“I brought a change of clothes. Otherwise, you wouldn’t be able to get out of the room, right?”

Certainly.

I was wearing a negligee which exposed a lot of my skin.

“Thank you very much for your consideration.”

“It’s a natural course of action for Lady Eliane is our important guest. Excuse me, then.”

Saying so, Abby approached me—obviously trying to assist me in changing my attire.

“Uh, uhm! I can change my attire on my own!”

“This is also part of my duty, therefore please don’t go against me and just let me do my job.”

Well, *what do I do?*

Even though Abby was of the same sex, it was kind of embarrassing to be seen in my underwear...

...However, her gaze pressured me. As such, I had no say in the end.

“What do you think?”

Abby asked as I stood in front of a mirror which reflected my entire body—

“Wow, how beautiful...”

There stood me in a lovely dress.

“...Again, is it really okay for me to wear such a beautiful dress?”

“Of course, compared to yesterday’s dress, it is indeed cheaper, but I’m glad you like it.”

*Because it’s exactly the kind of dress I was not allowed to wear back in my former kingdom!*

It was a very lovely dress, it was also very easy to move around in.



It was made of fine materials, indeed...

"I will never be able to thank you enough, I will never forget your kindness!"

"Lady Eliane is such a humble person, therefore I'm very humbled."

Abby laughed a little.

"Everyone is very kind to me... not only is Nigel such a fine person, he also treats me nicely..."

"Lord Nigel is indeed a good man. He is a prince who cares about his people. He's loved by the citizens—no one is more suitable than him to be the future king."

Abby's words reminded me of the warm greetings he received from the citizens yesterday.

"True... I envy anyone who'll get married to him. He has a fiancée, right?"

"I don't think so."

*She doesn't think so...?*

"...Someone as fine as Nigel... shouldn't he have been engaged ever since he was a child?"

"Indeed. Several times before, he has been engaged, but..."

Albeit he was such a cool and gentle person, it turned out he didn't really like women?

"Lord Nigel seemed unsure. In the end, those engagements didn't last..."

"...But why?"

"This is the extent to what I can tell you, Ms. Eliane. Why don't you ask him yourself?"

"O, of course, it's just unusual. My curiosity was piqued..."

But when I heard that Nigel didn't have a fiancée, somewhere in my heart, was relief—

— *but why?*

—*why am I relieved?*

*Whether Nigel has a fiancée or not, it has nothing to do with me!*

As I thought, ever since yesterday, something had happened to me.

“C-come to think of it, what are you going to do, today, Ms. Abby?”

I forced myself to change the topic to dissuade my feelings.

“The King’s pet, Ralph, I’m in charge of feeding him this morning.”

Ralph—it was that cute Fenrir!

“...Looks like it’ll be pretty tough.”

“Would Lady Eliane like to come with me?”

“Is that okay!?”

“In fact, I hope you do. I heard that Ralph is also fond of Lady Eliane. Even if I’m able to feed him, I can’t get too close to Ralph.”

*I can do it!*

As I thought about Ralph-chan, my eyes sparkled.

“Well, then I’d love to!”

“Fufu, Lady Eliane is quite innocent, isn’t she? Even though you’re beautiful, there’s also a side of you that is childish—if I were a man, I’d surely fall in love with you.”

Abby smiled at me.

“Then, shall we go?”

“Alright!”

# Chapter 21

## I Gave Fenrir Breakfast

When we reached the courtyard, Ralph was lying on the grass.

The shining sun gave a good feeling.

“Time for breakfast.”

*“What’s that?”*

As soon as Ralph spotted us, he stood up.

*“Aren’t you the woman who healed me yesterday?”*

Of course, I was the only one who could hear him.

“Yes, I’ll be here for a while.”

*“That’s good. Ralph has a lot of free time, but no one to talk to. As such, your presence will be of help.”*

Ralph wagged his tail happily.

...He was reminiscent of a big dog.

Not to mention, he spoke in third person. Such cuteness! I fell in love with him over and over.

“I’ve heard it from Lord Nigel—so Lady Eliane truly can converse with Ralph?”

Abby seemed to be surprised at the situation.

“Yes, I can.”

“My! Then, what does Ralph think about me? I’m always worried about that!”

Abby clung to me.

Such was the case with His Highness the King, too.

*Owners really do worry about what their pets think about them, I guess...*

I turned to Ralph-chan.

*“She’s a good person who feeds me. It’s about time for me to acknowledge Abby.”*

For some reason, the way he spoke sounded high-handed.

“Ralph-chan, I’ve heard from Ms. Abby. Ralph-chan, why won’t you let Ms. Abby—or rather, other people, get close to you?”

*“Mu, I have to apologize for that. It’s my instinct as a Fenrir. Give it some time, and I may let Abby touch my fur.”*

As I thought, the way he spoke was indeed high-handed.

*At this rate, this child will end up becoming an arrogant Fenrir!*

“Uh, uhm... Ms. Abby, Ralph-chan said he loves you very much.”

*“What!?”*

“I, is that true!?”

Ralph tried to say something, but before that could happen, Abby had already leaned forward.

“Indeed. Ralph-chan is a shy boy. It’s akin to how little boys sometimes pester the girls they have crushes on.”

*“Fufufu~ my, so Ralph is like that.”*

Abby was in a good mood.

*“The way you conveyed it was way off!”*

Ralph-chan seemed displeased, but I thought it was a good opportunity for them to get closer in the future.

“Alright then, my precious Ralph, time for breakfast~”

*“Oh, o-okay... my stomach is already rumbling.”*

Abby took out a large chunk of meat from the bucket.

Once the chunk of meat was placed a distance away from him, Ralph-chan wagged his tail as he approached it.

*“Fumufumu, as always, boa meat is delicious—I’ll become addicted at this*

*rate...”*

Boa was a demon.

However, it wasn't particularly strong.

“This side of Ralph-chan is truly like that of a demon...”

I muttered as I watched Ralph-chan devour the demon meat.

Apparently, Fenrir seemed to eat demon flesh as his main diet.

The words ‘demon flesh’ conjured an image of a rarity... however, it wasn't actually so.

That was because day and night, adventurers and knights would be hunting demons.

Therefore, it was easy to procure the flesh of a mediocre demon.

“Ms. Abby! I want to feed Ralph-chan too!”

“Of course. Well then, Lady Eliane, will you please give this to him?”

Saying so, Abby handed me a piece of wood.

“...Wood?”

No, it wasn't actually a piece of wood.

When I smelled it, it smelled like *katsuobushi* (bonito flakes) *Huh?*

*Katsuobushi?*

“Could this be... *katsuobushi*?”

“You did well recognizing it through smell alone—it's precisely that. Ralph loves *katsuobushi* the most, you know?”

While I was talking to Abby, I wondered if Ralph had noticed. He waved his tail as he approached me.

*Katsuobushi...* and a Fenrir—I couldn't wrap my head around that.

*Are you a cat? Or a dog?*

*“Woman, hand it over this very second.”*

“Ara, but my name is Eliane? Don’t refer to me as ‘woman’?”

*“I think it’s already enough for a woman to be called a woman—surrender that piece of golden tree-thing right this instant.”*

Apparently, he called katsuobushi ‘piece of golden tree’.

It seemed that even though he liked katsuobushi, he didn’t understand it too much.

“Now that the Fenrir has said that— *catch!*”

*Poi—!*

I threw the katsuobushi far away.

*Zaza—!*

Ralph kicked the ground and headed for the katsuobushi. His speed was faster than light.

After fetching the katsuobushi, he returned to us.

*“Haa, haa, what did you do just now?”*

“You’ve fetched it properly, therefore I’ll reward you.”

I gently patted Ralph-chan’s head.

*“It feels ticklish...”*

“Just endure it.”

After saying that, Ralph-chan crouched on the ground and began to eat the delicious katsuobushi.

For a creature as big as Ralph-chan, he should be able to swallow it in one go, but apparently, he wanted to enjoy the flavor.

I was happy I could watch Ralph-chan eat.

“...Who would’ve thought Ralph can be this docile! Except for Lord Nigel and His Highness the King, he almost never lets anyone else touch him! Lady Eliane truly has a pure heart!”

Behind me, Abby was stunned.

*...Sorry for snatching your duty.*

But I couldn't withstand his fluffiness! I wanted to enjoy more of his fluffiness!

After we had calmed down a little...

"So, you're here, Eliane."

Nigel appeared in the courtyard.

"Yes., I was feeding Ralph-chan..."

"I see..."

*Hmm?*

Something seemed strange about Nigel.

He looked terribly panicked.

"What happened? It seems like you were looking for me..."

"I really can't hide anything from you..."

Nigel turned serious.

"Forgive me for saying this to a guest, however, Eliane, can you lend me your aid?"

"Eh? Did something happen after all? Of course, I will help you as much as I can."

"I'm saved...! Thank you!"

Saying so, Nigel took my hand.

"We don't have time to idle, sorry. I'll explain while we're moving."

"I understand."

I honestly wanted more details, but there was no helping it. It seemed to be an emergency.

"Alright then, Ralph-chan, bye-bye..."

*"Don't hesitate to visit me again, Eliane."*

I shook Ralph-chan's paw, and he responded by wagging his tail.

He had called me, 'Eliane'... how happy I was!

Despite the fact that my hair had stood, I still rushed out of the courtyard with Nigel.



# Chapter 22

## I was Called a Goddess

“Where are we heading?”

I asked as I followed Nigel—he replied with a somber look.

“The barracks.”

“The barracks... of the knights?”

“Indeed.”

“Why to such a place?”

“Truthfully, there are a lot of injured people. Quite a number of healers have been mobilized, but they can barely keep up.

Hence why, I thought Eliane could lend her power there...”

*Aah, I see.*

Judging from Nigel’s serious expression, it seemed to be quite a dire situation.

I still wanted to ask various questions, but it would be wiser to just hurry to the barracks...

“It’s here.”

After we reached the barracks, we went in immediately.

The inside was akin to a battlefield—loud screams echoed all around.

“Haven’t we received the potions yet?!”

“It’s useless! We’ve bought all the potions in the city, but it’s just not enough!”

“*Guh!* Healer! Bring a healer!”

“I’ve put up a request in the guild, but their respond is slow!”

Inside the barracks, people who appeared to be knights were running

around.

Due to that, no one noticed our arrival.

“Adolf.”

Meanwhile, Nigel spoke to the man whom was delivering instructions.

“Ni, Nigel?”

“The situation doesn’t seem to be very good.”

“Yes... there are not enough potions, or healers... if nothing is done, victims may occur...”

Adolf...—ah, the *dandy* knight leader I met during my first encounter with Nigel.

I could feel the astringency of adults.

“Adolf seems to have been injured, too?”

When I gazed at Adolf, his side was bloodied.

“Oh! You’re the saint of that time!”

“I’m not a saint!”

Being called a saint, I was shocked for a moment—but he certainly didn’t think of me as an actual saint, he was just nicknaming me that.

However, I had already screamed.

“I, I see, well, I’m confused too. When I turned around, I was already injured like this.”

“You don’t have to talk. Remaining standing like this must be painful for you.”

I’d like to talk about various things, but first...

“I’ll heal your injury right away.”

I put my hand on Adolf’s side and activated my healing magic.

“Oh, ooh...! The pain is going away...!”

Then, in a blink of an eye, Adolf’s injury was healed.

If that was the degree of injury, then it'd only take me a moment.

"A, as I thought! You're a saint!"

"Stop calling me that... on the other hand, I don't think you have time to answer my questions..."

As we chatted, the knights in the barracks were suffering from pain.

Adolf's injury was nothing compared to theirs.

I could see a dying knight whose breath was rough.

A person who seemed to be a healer continued to give his damndest to cast healing magic, but it just wasn't enough.

"Explain later, for now, I shall cure them."

I extended my hand—

"— *Wide Heal.*"

After I chanted so, the barracks was enshrouded in a gentle light.

When it came to that many people, it was necessary to put in a lot of magical power. Well, that didn't mean I'd also be depleted of my magic power, though.

The light wrapped around the injuries of the knights. Before my eyes, they began to heal.

Eventually...

"...Oh! I'm healed!"

"I thought I was a goner for sure!"

"What the helz is going on!?"

Even though they were confused, everyone screamed in joy.

...I didn't think I needed to worry about them anymore considering how loud they had become.

"M, Miss!? I know you're amazing, but to heal this many people in an instant?!"

Surprised, Adolf's eyes widened.

“If it’s only this, it’s nothing. Everyone, I’m glad you’re safe.”

I smiled reassuringly at Adolf.

Looking at us, did the other knights also noticed?

“I, is that the lady who healed us!?”

“That smile of her... a saint... no, she’s a goddess!”

“Thank you, young lady! I owe you my life!”

In an instant, everyone’s attention was focused on me.

“N, n, no, it’s fine, it was nothing, you see...”

*Gosh...*

I was just not used to receiving so much gratitude.

Back in my former kingdom, there were times when I had to continuously heal for an entire night when similar incident occurred.

Although the knights were grateful to me, Claude downplayed it—“—*Hmph! It’s only that!*”

Considering that, the difference between my current treatment and the previous one was akin to night and day.

“Listen, this person is an excellent healer who hailed from another kingdom for some matters!”

Nigel stepped forward and explained.

The reason he called me a ‘healer’ was because my identity as a saint couldn’t be revealed.

The other knights finally realized the prince was there and corrected their postures at the same time.

“We’re lucky she happened to come to this kingdom. We should be grateful to her—and most importantly, thank you for bravely fighting for the kingdom. On behalf of my Father, His Majesty, I thank you. We will prepare your reward soon, so please look forward to it.”

“Uooo—!” Towards his words, the other knights exclaimed.

The hellish scene from before had vanished without a trace.

Nigel was pretty cool, to be so brave in such a place...

I wondered if good-looking guys would look cool, regardless of whatever they were doing.

With that in mind, Nigel suddenly turned towards me—

— *pachin!*

— he winked at me!

No—! Stop—!

Be still, my beating heart—!

“S, so, Mr. Adolf, how did this happen?”

I turned my eyes away from Nigel and asked Adolf such.

“It’s a long story...”

It seemed that the number of demons in the area had recently begun to increase.

The Behemoth that Adolf and Nigel encountered last time was no exception.

“Must be difficult...”

“Well, we experienced this kind of thing on a regular basis. We have knights and adventurers to prevent such things from happening. However, the increase has been a little too much lately. If we leave it as it is, a demon may someday invade the city.”

Recently, it had been confirmed that there was a large herd of demons in a nearby forest.

The first unit of knights led by Adolf successfully subdued them.

“However, the numbers were just too high... after slaying the hordes of demons and returning here, well, the result is as you can see...”

I see.

Which was why, after listening to Adolf, Nigel called out to me who

could use healing magic.

“...Which basically means, we can’t dilly-dally...”

After listening to me, Adolf nodded.

We were basically racing against time.

If it was only one or two, we could still manage. But what if 100 or more demons invaded the city?

There were women, children, and also elderly—all of them were non-combatants. As such, they’d soon be devoured by the demons—we’d basically be in deep water.

If so...

“For the time being, we can only hope that the demons don’t invade the city, right?”

“Yes, and we can also exterminate monsters outside the city to an extent...”

*Alright.*

I then told Mr. Adolf—

“—if so, my magic might be able to do something.”

# Chapter 23

## Let's Erect a Barrier

“Eliane, are you truly okay with this?”

Nigel said with a worried look.

The conversation happened later.

After leaving the barracks where Adolf and his subordinates were, we returned to the royal castle.

“Yes, if I raised a barrier, the crisis will be over soon.”

I reassured him.

That was right.

After I heard that monsters were increasing around Lynchgiham, I tried to create a barrier for the kingdom.

The range was the entire city.

By doing that, not only monsters, but also dragons and demons wouldn't be able to enter the kingdom in the future.

“But, is it really possible to create a barrier that will envelop the entire kingdom? I heard just creating a barrier the size of a person is extremely difficult.”

It was as Nigel said—

—well, if the person in question was an ordinary wizard, it would be.

“Ara? Back in my former kingdom, I keep the barrier up for many years? Also, this kingdom is located on higher ground, therefore, it won't be a problem.”

I placed a finger by my mouth and explained.

“Thus, I will set up a barrier right away.”

*Focus.*

Whenever I created a barrier, I would picture a film wrapping around an object.

However, it was a delicate work. If I made even the slightest mistake, said 'film' would break.

Thus, I carefully poured my magical power and created a barrier.

After a while...

"...It's done."

About fifteen minutes later, I informed Nigel.

"So soon?"

Rather than surprised, Nigel was confused.

"Yes."

"T-thank you."

"It doesn't feel like anything has changed, doesn't it?"

"Y, yes... I'm sorry, but I wonder if this will really prevent monsters from approaching..."

"Please do not worry. I made certain the barrier is tight. This will prevent monsters from entering the city."

"I, I see, forgive me for doubting you."

"It's alright."

It was inevitable for Nigel to doubt me.

A barrier cast by an ordinary wizard would also seem like nothing.

Despite so, if the person whom was being protected by the barrier were weak, his body might feel sluggish.

Originally, barriers were usually invoked during battles or expeditions.

In my opinion, barriers that causes those who still have to face off against monsters to feel uncomfortable are third-rated barriers.

"You should be able to feel the effect after a while. Let's wait patiently



until then.”

“Alright, then. Thank you, Eliane.”



About a week had passed since then.

“Eliane!”

As I was playing with the Fenrir, Ralph, in the courtyard, Nigel rushed in.

However, that time, his countenance was different from a week ago.

“Ara, Nigel, what’s wrong? Could it be, the knights—...”

“It’s not that. This time, I have good news.”

Nigel was out of breath as he explained—

— *is it because he ran so fast?*

“Today, I heard the report from Adolf, the knight leader. It’s about the state of the monsters around the kingdom recently.”

“How was it?”

When I inquired, Nigel’s tone became excited.

“Monsters are no longer within Lynchgiham’s vicinity! Until now, I had to dispatch a lot of people to guard the border of the city, but he said it would be fine to reduce the number some. Since monsters are no longer close to Lynchgiham, we can rest assured for a bit and create a long-term monster subjugation plan.”

“Are you sure Mr. Adolf wasn’t mistaken? For monsters to no longer be in the vicinity...”

Truthfully, I knew the real answer, but I still tested him.

Nigel shook his head.

“It may have been only a week, but the numbers have significantly decreased. The abnormality of it is truly obvious. Even the knights feel that it can’t be ignored. Eliane, it’s all thanks to your barrier...”

“Told you so. In the future, monsters will no longer be able to approach Lynchgiham.”

Actually, the fact that nothing seemed to have changed after a barrier had been erected was the main reason people believed said barrier didn’t exist in the first place.

Because of that, people often said my barrier was actually unnecessary.

*‘Does the barrier even exist? Rather than because of a barrier, monsters are probably just not approaching...’*

A prime example of that sort of person was Prince Claude of my former kingdom.

I honestly thought the effect of the barrier would become known after some time.

“Thank you very much!”

Nigel held my hands—

— *h, huh?!*

Nigel! Your face is too close!

“Thanks to you, the people of Lynchgiham, including myself, can sleep peacefully. Thank you very much! How should I express this gratitude to you...”

“Y, your words are already aplenty! So please distance yourself!”

Even after I said so, Nigel didn’t let go of my hands.

To be thanked by such a beauty, it didn’t feel bad... but I was truly at loss because I had never experiencead anything like this before.

Back in my former kingdom, I was basically kept in the castle—for I was the saint.

# Chapter 24

## Invasion of the Royal Castle

Time rewound a little.

In the kingdom of Verclaim, a dragon appeared above the royal capital, causing great confusion.

Moreover, it disappeared like a smoke before anyone realized it and the confusion only grew.

Nevertheless, of course, the dragon hadn't yet left the royal capital.

It instead took human form and invaded the royal castle.

"W-what are you doing!?"

"It's an intruder! Everyone, catch him— *huh...*?"

*What a noisy flies, these are...*

While the dragon mimicking the appearance of human was exploring the castle, a human who appeared to be soldier approached.

*Well, it can't be helped.*

Even though he had taken the appearance of an agile figure, the appearance of a suspicious person like him would of course give rise to concern.

*Naturally, I have to eliminate them,* or so the dragon thought.

However.

"Not worth the fight."

The dragon held out his hand and the approaching humans fell on spot.

It was a sleep magic.

To kill those weaklings—it was simply not worth it. If it was Klaus, however, the story would have been different. He'd like to play with him a little. However, he was in a hurry at the moment.

“Even so, I still find it hard to move in this form... my magical power has also been cut to one-tenth of its usual.”

While muttering, the dragon rolled his shoulders.

The current form of the dragon was of a beautiful boy with tanned skin.

His eyelashes were long and his gaze dignified—his appearance would surely overwhelm anyone.

Such was the form the dragon always transformed into whenever he assumed human form.

“However, it’s been about 100 years since I last used this form...”

While he was doing such, about ten soldiers tried to attack the dragon from the front again.

“Boring.”

Again, he held his hand up and cast sleep magic. Most of the soldiers fell asleep.

“H, huh!? What happened to everyone!? What kind of technique did you use!?”

At that moment, he refrained from casting his spell on one of them.

The man who appeared to be soldier held a spear, but his legs were trembling like crazy.

*It’s actually commendable that he didn’t attempt to escape, despite being so scared...*

The dragon approached, grasped the man’s chin, and lifted it.

“Guah—!”

“Say, do you know where Prince Claude is? Where is that guy now?”

He stared into the man’s eyes.

“A, as if I’d tell you!”

Despite the man’s fluttering legs, he refused to answer.

That soldier was as wonderful as Klaus. Even though it was a rotten kingdom, the soldiers were actually loyal.

However.

*['Prince Claude has escaped to the underground shelter...! What would happen if he were to learn about this...!?']*

"I see, so that's where Claude is."

"...Huh?"

The dragon had read the soldier's mind. Meanwhile, the soldier could only go agape.

"What the hell are you—..."

"You are of no use to me anymore, what a bother."

"Guhaa!"

After being thrown against the wall, the man fainted onto the floor.

"Finally, I have determined Claude's location. Who would've thought it'd be this troublesome?"

—the dragon didn't know that the soldier was the man who advised Claude earlier.

Could it be considered lucky for him to have met said soldier?

When he read the mind of the soldier, he could see the route leading to the underground shelter.

Apparently, it was quite close.

"Even so, why an underground shelter? If you're truly an aristocrat, take up a sword and fight against me, geez... as expected of cowardly humans."

*Well, whatever.*

"I should arrive there soon."

After putting the soldiers who tried to capture him to sleep, the dragon went to the underground shelter.

Eventually, he reached a small iron door.

“Is it here? Certainly, I can feel the presences of two people...”

The dragon touched the door and tried to get inside.

But... *a barrier?*

It was quite unexpected to encounter a barrier there.

Even so.

“A barrier, one equivalent to a thin piece of paper, won’t take much for me to destroy, honestly.”

*Parin.*

When the dragon poured in magical power, the barrier was immediately released with the sound of glass breaking.

“Did you honestly think a barrier of this level could stop me?”

What a bunch of stupid people...

Of course, there were also wonderful barriers—for example, the barrier created by Eliane.

It enveloped everything—the royal capital, the vast ranges of villages and towns, the territories of that kingdom...

...Her barrier didn’t have the slightest gap, even a dragon couldn’t break through it.

“Not that I’ve ever thought of destroying it, though. Other than those inhumanely foolish idiots, Eliane was here.”

Incidentally, back when Eliane was still in that kingdom, she said something about a woman who backstabbed her.

A woman who claimed to be the, ‘True Saint’.

How was that, ‘True Saint’ doing?

Could it be she was inside that shelter?

“...Impossible, she dares call herself a, ‘True Saint’ after creating such a pathetic barrier?”

Well, if he met with Claude, surely, he'd understand. He'd demand a full, but also short, explanation.

The dragon pushed the door open and entered.

“W, who dares enter this place?!”

The moment he went in, the jarring voice of a man was the first thing he heard.

# Chapter 25

## Foolish Prince

□ Prince Claude's POV

"It's such a dark and damp place, isn't it..."

Such was the first remark Leticia, Prince Claude's fiancée, uttered after they entered the underground shelter.

"Indeed. It is rarely used, after all. I know how unpleasant it is for someone who loves beauty like you, Leticia. But please, be patient."

"...I understand."

Even though Leticia said that, for a moment, her face was distorted with discomfort.

—*well, what can I do?*

*A place like this indeed doesn't look good on her.*

He hoped the turmoil caused by the dragon would wrap up early so they could leave the underground shelter.

"Other than that, Leticia, can you put up a barrier for the underground shelter?"

"Eh? Isn't this a safe place?"

"Just in case, *just in case*. Even though it's an underground shelter, the only thing securing the entrance is a lock. Usually, it wouldn't be a problem. However, this is a dragon invasion, the underground shelter might get destroyed."

Leticia proceeded to extend both her hands forward. From her hands, pale light was emitted.

"Ooh! How divine!"

For Leticia to be able to use such holy magic—didn't that just prove that she was indeed the 'True Saint'—



—as he thought, Eliane was definitely the fake one.

“It’s done.”

“That was fast. It only took 20 minutes—as expected, you’re the real saint.”

Claude was impressed.

In fact, Eliane could make a barrier of that size in less than a second—but the oblivious prince wasn’t even aware of that.

“Then, we can rest easy. I hope things settle down quickly...”

—!!

After a while, screams could be heard outside the underground shelter.

“What’s happening!?”

“Aren’t the soldiers moving to slay the dragon!?”

“I hope so.”

However, the fuss had in fact happened.

For some reason, Claude felt that he shouldn’t just ignore it.

Claude felt anxious.

—*Kiii...*

The entrance of the underground shelter suddenly opened, making a squeaking noise—

— *huh, why*—

The door of the underground shelter should’ve been locked. Moreover, it should had been protected by a barrier. Only someone with magic greater than mediocre should be able to touch it.

From the other side of the door, a man appeared—

— *a youth?*

Despite so, the youth had warlike eyes akin to a wild animal eyeing its prey. Just by looking at him, Claude felt like his heart would stop.

“Who dares enter this place—!?”

Claude asked the man.

“Because I can. Besides, this is a door, isn’t it? Or is it meant to be just a mere decoration?”

The man tilted his neck.

*What the hell is with this guy? Is he one of my soldiers? But why would he come to this place, then?*

While Claude was confused, Leticia, who stood beside him, trembled.

“This person... has a tremendous amount of magical power. This magical power... is akin to that of a dragon—!”

“A dragon—!?”

Generally, dragons were known for possessing a 100 court mages’ worth of magical power. Speaking of court mages, they were the pinnacle of wizardry—as such, only five court mages existed in that kingdom. From that alone, it was obvious how outrageous a dragon’s magical power was.

Hearing Leticia’s words, the man laughed out loud—

“—Hahaha! That’s right, I’m the dragon! Something wrong?”

“The dragon...? But your appearance doesn’t appear to be so...”

Claude, who still didn’t believe the man in front of him was the dragon, voiced his doubt.

“If it’s merely transforming into a human, it’s a piece of cake.”

“T-then how were you able to enter this place!? Saint Leticia put up a barrier, right!?”

“Huh? You call that a barrier? I don’t think that kind of ‘barrier’ will hamper me, really. Compared to Eliane’s barrier, it was too fragile.”

Upon hearing that, Claude turned to Leticia.

Then—

“—A, as if anyone in this world could create a barrier that can block a

dragon! No one is capable of such a feat!”

Leticia argued.

The man, who heard her, laughed again—

“—Turns out you’re this hopeless! It’s all because you’ve exiled the true saint! You will regret it! ...Well, now, rather than messing around like this...”

Claude couldn’t see the man move.

When he thought the man claiming to be the dragon had disappeared, a face appeared in front of him.

“Guh—!”

Claude was pressed against the wall by the man’s hand.

“Answer me—the bastard who banished the saint, was it you?”

“The saint”? But Eliane is just a fake saint!”

“A fake saint? The hell are you saying?”

“She pretended to be the saint when her real aim was to drain the kingdom’s finances—as such, wasn’t it only natural for her to be banished?!”

“...Haa.”

The man sighed deeply.

“What a foolish thing to say. Well, Eliane had indeed spoken about how much of an imbecile you are. Eliane said she was at risk of being exiled—who would’ve thought that it’d become reality?”

“What are you talking about—”

“— *Shut up.*”

With a flash, the man punched Claude’s gut.

Initially, it felt like a light bump—

—however, in the next second, indescribable pain struck Claude.

*I, is my stomach rupturing!?*

It was a terrible suffering which left him unable to breathe for a few seconds.

“First off—Eliane is the true saint. The evidence is that due to her barrier, I couldn’t even get close to this kingdom. Yet you exiled her... are you sane?”

The man grabbed Claude by his bangs and forced him to lift his face.

“Even if there were no barrier, I like her enough to not do something as troublesome as destroying the kingdom. I can do it whenever I feel like it, but I haven’t feel the need.”

“Claude!”

As the man spoke to Claude, Leticia screamed and attempted to use magic.

However, instead of the pale, divine, light she exuded from before, her current magical power was jet-black in color.

“*Ho...* I see, wench, you’re that kind of being.”

The man curiously gazed at Leticia.

“However, despite everything, your spell still doesn’t work— *which makes it meaningless.*”

When the man extended his hand, the black aura enshrouding Leticia’s body gradually dispelled.

Apparently, she was trying to attack the man with the magic. However, due to said man, her magic was cancelled instead.

“The two of you are of no use to me anymore.”

The man threw Claude onto the floor, causing him to kiss the floor hard.

“Guha—!”

Intense pain hit Claude’s entire body.

Claude gritted his teeth, trying to maintain his consciousness.

“Eliane is gone, this kingdom is meaningless to me. I’m going on a trip for a while—a stress-relieving trip.”

“A, are you letting us go...?”

“Letting you go’...?”

The man grinned—the corners of his mouth twisted.

“It’s the opposite. The end of this kingdom has just begun.”

“What do you mean...?”

“Let me tell you something interesting—this kingdom isn’t only targeted by me, but other archdemons. After all, this kingdom has precious magical artifacts and other valuable treasures, golden, silver, and what-not. As the kingdom has an enormous populous of humans, it’s also possible to take advantage of that for magical experiments. Also, demons are hundreds of times crueller than me, just saying.”

The man continued.

“The reasons the demons haven’t attacked so far, it was not only because of Eliane’s barrier, but also because of my presence. To put it simply, because I’m always in a staring contest with them, they haven’t been able to lay their hands on this kingdom.”

“In short...?”

“It won’t be strange if demons invade this kingdom soon. Because the barrier— *and also me*, have disappeared.”

“N, no way!”

Of course, it was also possible the man before them was spouting bald-faced lies.

However, from how confident he looked, it was unbelievable for anyone to think that he was lying.

“I don’t want to soil my hands with the blood of an imbecile like you. I’ll leave the dirty work to the demons.”

The man said so and subsequently left the underground shelter.

“C-Claude, are you okay!?”

“Y, y, yes...”

Claude’s consciousness gradually went away, perhaps because the man

had finally left.

However, that was but one adversity...

...for the time being, he decided to just be grateful he still had his life.

Claude of that time was still naïve.

As the kingdom reached its end, more miserable things awaited.

# Chapter 26

## Nigel's Little Sister is Very Cute

One morning.

I was giving the Fenrir, Ralph, breakfast.

“I’m going to throw it— *catch!*”

“*Wan!*”

As he chased the ‘piece of the golden tree’—I meant, katsuobushi, Ralph woofed like a dog.

“Is it delicious?”

“*It is! It’s just a piece of wood, and yet, how can it be so delicious!?*”

It wasn’t a piece of food, it was katsuobushi.

“Alright.”

Ralph-chan was chewing the katsuobushi gloriously. I hoped he’d return to his full health soon.

While looking at Ralph, I gently stroked his body.

When I said that I wanted to get along with Ralph-chan more, the task to give Ralph-chan breakfast suddenly fell onto my hands.

To be honest, I had a lot of free time.

If I didn’t do that much, I’d become lazy.

...Well, to be honest, I just wanted to pet Ralph-chan.

I enjoyed playing with Ralph-chan a lot.

“Ah—! She’s touching Ralph—!”

Suddenly, I heard the voice of a little girl.

“Cecily wants to touch him, too!”

When I turned around, a little girl about 6-years-old ran towards us.

“Who are you?”

“Cecily is Cecily! Big Sister, to be able to touch Ralph, that’s cheating!”

The girl, Cecily, said so, and tried to stroke Ralph.

However—

“—mumumu...”

Ralph escaped from Cecily’s grasp and distanced himself.

To take such an attitude towards such a small child...

“Ralph—!”

I raised my index finger and pointed it at Ralph.

However, Ralph kept being dismayed.

*“Mu... I don’t like Cecily. I used to let her touch me, but the way she touches me hurts.”*

Well... as if children could do anything about that.

However, it was also quite pitiful. For a high-ranking creature such as Ralph to be put off to such an extent...

“Cecily-chan...”

“What is it, Big Sister?”

Cecily-chan looked a bit dejected after Ralph-chan avoided her—that was only natural.

When I looked at her face again, I noticed the beauty of her skin.

She had bright and soft skin.

As a woman, I felt jealous.

“Cecily-chan, why are you here?”

“Hmm? It’s not that strange, after all, this is Cecily’s house!”



Cecily spread her arms.

...Cecily's house...

... *Could it be, this girl...*

"Hey, Eliane. What an early riser you are."

As I pondered, Nigel also appeared in the courtyard.

"Nigel, the same goes for you."

"It's necessary for I have many duties to finish. It has already become a habit at this point."

Nigel smiled bitterly.

Then, he turned to Cecily-chan.

"Cecily woke up early too, huh?"

"Yes!"

"Even though you used to oversleep all the time."

"I mustn't lose to big Brother! Cecily will do her best to wake up early!"

"...You said the same thing three days ago."

Nigel spoke to Cecily in a friendly manner.

Cecily also seemed fond of Nigel. She loved getting her head patted by him.

"Nigel, could it be, this child..."

"Hmm? Right, I haven't introduced you to her, yet. This is Cecily, my little sister."

*As I thought—!*

*I already felt an inkling!*

"If she's Nigel's sister..."

"Indeed. She's the first princess of this kingdom."

*As I thought—!*

*That's just obvious—!*

Otherwise, such a tiny child wouldn't have been able to roam so freely around the royal castle.

"I'm Cecily, the princess. What about you, Big Sister?"

"I'm Eliane, for the time being, I'm staying in this castle."

"I see, Eliane, you smell good! Next to Big Brother, you're the person I like the most!"

Then, Cecily jumped onto my chest.

Such an innocent child... it could be said she had no wariness about me.

When I glanced at Nigel, he looked slightly embarrassed.

It couldn't be helped.

Because the first princess was hugging a stranger.

I thought she was fortunate since it was me. If it had been a weird person, it would have led to a big incident.

"So, Nigel has a little sister..."

"Didn't I tell you before?"

"You didn't!"

"Sorry about that."

Just like His Majesty the King, his son was also brief with his explanations.

Cecily-chan didn't seem to be that similar to Nigel. The king was apparently in good health...

...Well, since he was the king, it wouldn't be strange for him to have many children.

Since Cecily was the first princess, was she born from his wife?

No, no, no.

*Don't get too carried away, me!*

It had nothing to do with me. It'd be bad if I snooped around too much.

"Cecily-chan is such a cute girl, isn't she?"

"Yes, I'm proud of her, it's just..."

"What?"

Seeing Nigel tensing up, I attentively listened to him.

"Something troublesome happened. Abby even told me to do something about it."

Nigel shrugged.

For a maid to be able to say such thing to the prince, it was clear that they had bond of trust with each other.

"What is the problem?"

"Even if I told Eliane, it won't lead to anything, but..."

After Nigel told me everything, Cecily was baffled for she didn't understand a thing.

# Chapter e27

## Let's Cook

"Cecily is a picky eater."

Nigel explained to me.

"So... she has a lot of likes and dislikes? It may be troublesome, but for a child, isn't that only natural? Among children, I think it's unavoidable for them to have a lot of likes and dislikes."

"Well, there's that..."

Nigel still seemed unsatisfied.

"Cecily-chan, what is it that you dislike?"

"Bitter-tasting leaf!"

That was terribly abstract...

"Cecily dislikes vegetables..."

"Vegetables? Bitter-tasting leaf... maybe, cabbage?"

"Yes, cabbage is *one* of them."

"Cecily is also not good with the orange, hard, one!"

Orange and hard... carrots?

Nigel stared at Cecily and heaved a sigh.

"Cecily doesn't just dislike one or two things—she can't eat any vegetable."

*Well, that's just not good!*

To dislike vegetables in general... what about her nutrition!? Moreover, Cecily was still a child! For her to have developed such a habit as a child, I worried for when she'd turned into an adult.

"Cecily-chan, if you don't eat vegetables, you will not grow tall. Is that okay?"

“It’s okay! After all, Cecily has been doing just fine until now!”

Cecily clung to Nigel’s clothes.

That wasn’t good... it seemed that it’d be difficult to move Cecily’s heart through persuasion alone.

“Nigel, for today’s lunch, would you please allow me?”

“Does Eliane cook?”

I nodded.

“That’s fine, but Eliane, can you actually cook?”

“*Ara*, back in my former kingdom, cooking used to be my hobby? I have a good grasp on it, so leave it to me.”

I proudly hit my chest.

Nigel muttered to himself. “Why was the saint cooking in the first place?”

—Thus.

I was allowed to help make lunch for Nigel and the others.

“Wow! What a large kitchen!”

I entered the kitchen and unintentionally screamed.

Clean floors and walls!

The equipment was also in full set—I wanted to use all of them!

There was a wide selection of ingredients—such as vegetables and meats, my arms—they were tingling!

“I’ve heard about you from His Highness, but what is it that you intent to achieve?”

One of the chefs asked me such.

For some reason, he came off as arrogant to me—could he be the head chef?

“I want Cecily-chan to eat vegetables.”

“Her Highness? Just give up.” The chef waved his hand.

“Until now, many chefs have tried to overcome Cecily’s dislike of vegetables, but as always, it leads to nothing.”

“Is it that difficult?

“No matter how delicious the food is, Her Highness Cecily just wouldn’t have a taste. His Majesty even got angry in the past and tried to force her to eat some, but she cried and His Majesty let her off. Ever since that incident, no one has ever dared serve vegetables to Her Highness Cecily.”

The chef shrugged.

*Muu...* quite a stubborn lady she was!

However.

“Were the vegetables served as they are?”

“...? Of course?”

As I thought.

It was a bad idea to serve a dish which screamed, ‘*Vegetables!*’ to a child who disliked vegetables.

It was necessary to devise a way to make the vegetables not appear like vegetables.

“Excuse me... carrots, onions, peppers—do you have any minced meat?”

“Of course, here it is...”

I took the ingredients from the chef and spread them across the cutting board.

Okay! I shall start right away!

I wore an apron.

I rolled up my sleeves and started cooking right away.

“First, chop the vegetables...”

I finely chopped the carrots and onions.

It reminded me of when I was in my former kingdom.

That was quite a harsh time, but I was able to forget all my hardships whenever I was cooking.

“Mix them with the minced meat...”

In a silver bowl, the chopped vegetables, minced meat, and bread crumbs were mixed together. Lastly, I added some eggs.

Afterwards, I sprinkled it with salt and pepper...

“Knead! Knead! Knead!”

I kneaded it with my bare hands until they were all mixed together.

Hmm, what an effective stress releasing method!

The trick was to imagine the faces of annoying people—for me, they were Prince Claude and Leticia, the fake saint.

Soon, the minced meat, which had been mixed finely, was shaped into a small oval.

*Jiiish—*

—when I put the mixture on a frying pan covered with oil, I heard a crisp sound.

Shortly after, a delicious scent wafted. I just wanted to eat it now!

“Only the sauce is left... I shall make it separately.”

Actually, I'd like to garnish the plate with vegetables to add more color, but if I did that, Cecily-chan might get wary. I had to endure...

I wondered if it would be okay to use french fries made by another chef.

“Alright! Done!”

After I prepared the dish to match the exact number of people who were going to eat, I exclaimed such.

The man who seemed to be the head chef only sent a curious glance at

my way.

“Young lady, this is...”

“Yes, a hamburger steak.”

I explained to the chef.

“A hamburger steak? Did you give up upon feeding Her Highness Cecily vegetables?”

“Tsk tsk—that’s very naïve of you. It’s not just a hamburger steak—it’s a ‘Vegetable Hamburg Steak’.”

“What—!?”

Indeed.

At a glance, it seemed like a mere delicious hamburger steak.

However, in reality, it was a hamburger steak abundant with vegetables! Carrots and onions were mixed in with the minced meat!

“It doesn’t look that way at all! It was also pretty quick to make! Is it really fine to serve this?”

“Fufufu, it’s because I often used to cook hamburger steak before. As such, I know a fast method for making it.”

“I see... but, is it really possible feed Her Highness Cecily this? Aren’t you basically deceiving her? How about trying to make her eat vegetables as they are? It seems that she’ll notice them right away...”

“I’m sure it’ll be alright, don’t worry.”

I was confident.

“Well, I’ve prepared other dishes. I’m going to take them to the dinning hall right away. Since I’m curious, I’ll follow you.”

“I’ll be in your care.”

The waiters placed the dishes on the serving cart one after another.

I also helped with that—finally, the dishes were brought to Nigel and the others.



After entering the dinning hall, I said the opening line.

“Sorry for the wait—!”

# Chapter 28

## Time for the Actual Meal

In the grand dining hall was a long table.

Before Nigel and Cecily, who sat on the chairs, I served their plates containing the food.

“Oh, so today’s menu is hamburger steak.”

“It looks so delicious~”

Seeing the hamburger steak I had prepared, their eyes widened.

Fufufu. I could’ve just said it right then and there— “*I’m the one who made it.*” But I also wanted to hear their honest opinions.

Therefore, I shall keep quiet for a while.

“Please enjoy.”

“I shall begin to eat right away.”

“Me too~!”

The two clasped their hands.

Nigel passed his knife through the hamburger steak.

*Jyuuuwaaa—*

“—Delicious!”

Nigel’s eyes beamed.

“What a dish! I’ve never eaten a hamburger steak as delicious as this before!”

“I’m glad to hear that.”

“Cecily will also try it~!”

“By all means.”

Due to Nigel's urging, Cecily brought the hamburger steak to her mouth as well.

For such a little girl, her handling of a knife and fork was quite nimble.

Since she was the princess, Cecily must have begun receiving her education from an early age.

Cecily chewed her meal.

I was sure I had cooked it deliciously, but... what if she said it was bad and spat it out?

Hmm... the moment after I finished preparing it, I felt very confident, but now...

...however, my concerns turned out to be useless.

"Delicious!"

Cecily shared Nigel's opinion.

"This hamburger steak is really tasty!"

"What a relief..."

I rubbed my chest in relief.

"I agree, Cecily. Head Chef, today's hamburger steak is really delicious. Ah, could it be, Eliane helped in making this hamburger steak?"

As I thought, Nigel was sharp.

However, he was a little mistaken.

"...Your Highness."

"Hm?"

The chef who accompanied me stepped forward.

That was probably because he was worried.

I wondered if he was nervous, which would explain his quivering voice.

“I appreciate your praise, but it wasn’t made by me.”

“Then, by whom—...”

“Lady Eliane... she made it herself.”

“E, Eliane!?”

Nigel was so surprised, he stood up from his chair. It seemed that he totally hadn’t expected that.

“Eliane, you’re the one who cooked such a delicious dish?”

“I, indeed...”

“For you to be able to cook such a delicious hamburger steak... I’ve never eaten anything as delicious as this. It’s a flavor I’ve never tasted until now... how to say this...”

“Nigel, in truth, that hamburger steak...”

I told Nigel the truth.

“What?! It’s a ‘vegetable hamburger steak’!? But I don’t taste any vegetable...”

*Oh, he’s surprised, alright...*

...It was a great success.

“It was a common dish in my former kingdom. Apparently, this isn’t the case in Lynchgiham...”

Even though Lynchgiham was a wonderful kingdom, it seemed to be behind in terms of food...

...Well, considering the size of the kingdom, Lynchgiham was larger. It would’ve been easy for excellent chefs to gather here with various cooking techniques.

“Amazing! For Eliane to be able to do accomplish a feat! Thank you for the delicious meal!”

With that said, Nigel squeezed my hands.

...His handsome face was too close to me—getting accustomed to this was too hard. However, I thought I should adapt to it, soon.

“Cecily, what do you think of the hamburger steak?”

“Eh?”

*Oh dear...*

Cecily-chan smeared some sauce near her mouth.

Apparently, she didn't listen to our previous conversation, too taking in with devouring her hamburger steak.

“Cecily-chan, you spilled some sauce here.”

I wiped Cecily-chan's mouth with a napkin and stared at her.

“In that hamburger steak, I mixed in the vegetables Cecily-chan dislikes, you know?”

“The vegetable... the orange, bitter, and hard one?”

“I also mixed in the white one, and the green one.”

“Huh!?”

“But you still scarf it down, didn't you?”

“Y, yes... I didn't know...”

Cecily-chan looked confused.

“Because you thought they will always taste bad, you refuse to eat vegetables. However, as long as you don't think they are vegetable, you can eat them just fine. If you eat vegetables, you'll become even more beautiful, you know?”

“Even more beautiful...”

Cecily-chan lowered her face.

Oh my, did I get carried away and accidentally preach?

“Forgive me, Cecily-chan, but...”

“If I eat vegetables, will I be able to become like you, big sister?”

“Become like me?”

I pointed to myself.

Why did Cecily suddenly say that?

...Hmm, perhaps what she meant by that was she wanted to be able to cook like me.

If so, she'd need to eat vegetables. Otherwise, she wouldn't be able to make 'vegetable hamburger steak'.

"Yes, that's right. As long as you eat vegetables, you will be able to cook like me—"

"—if so, Cecily will do her best to eat vegetables! I also want to be as beautiful as Big Sister! I also want to be able to cook!"

Cecily-chan leaped into my chest.

What?

It was a little different from what I expected.

But... whatever?

Cecily-chan seemed intent on overcoming her dislike of vegetables.

Wasn't that a good result?

"Eliane?"

As I stroked Cecily-chan's head, Nigel called my name.

"Thank you very much, I was really troubled by Cecily's dislike of vegetables. I'd like to repay you with something..."

"I see..."

Well, in truth, there was really no need to reward me with anything—  
—however, there was something I wanted to do.

"Then, will you let me use the kitchen from time to time?"

"Huh? You'll be alright with that?"

Nigel looked stunned.

I liked cooking, so I had been wanting to cook to pass the time.

However, because the chefs were busy, I was reluctant to use part of

the kitchen.

Also, in my former kingdom, the kitchen was reserved only for chefs.

There was also a saying that the kitchen was the sacred place for cooks.

It wasn't a place that could be easily entered.

"Head Chef, what do you think?"

Nigel turned at the chef.

"Of course, it's fine! I was quite surprised by her cooking skill, too. If it's okay with you, I want you to teach me when you have the time."

The chef shrugged his shoulders.

I did it!

I finally got to cook in the kitchen!

That would make living in the royal castle even more enjoyable and exciting!

"Big Sister, teach Cecily how to cook."

"Sure!"

Even though it didn't mean that Cecily-chan's dislike of vegetables had settled down, it could be said that she had made great strides towards improvement.

I was also allowed to use the kitchen once in a while—a lot of good things sure happened that day.

# Chapter 29

## Birthday

Ever since that day, Cecily became fond of me.

“Hey, big sister, won’t you make that hamburger steak for me again?”

While saying that, Cecily-chan was still clinging to me.

“I’m sorry, but no can do, Cecily-chan. If you eat such a thing now, you won’t be able to eat dinner. Please be patient until then.”

“Hmm... but I’m hungry...”

Cecily-chan puffed her cheeks.

...How cute.

But I couldn’t spoil her too much, otherwise, Cecily-chan would grow into a bad adult.

I had to guide Cecily-chan in the right direction!

Our relationship as of the time was akin to sisters.

“I want you to serve that hamburger steak at my big brother’s birthday party.”

“Birthday party?”

*What was that?*

*I’ve never heard of such a thing...*

By the way, Cecily-chan’s older brother was Nigel who was also the first prince.

“Soon, it’ll be big brother’s birthday party. A gorgeous party is going to be held on that day. Big brother’s parties are always beautiful, and there’s going to be a lot of delicious food.”

*What’s that? Sounds like fun?*

Other than that, Nigel’s birthday?



“Cecily-chan, when’s big bro—I mean, *Nigel*’s birthday?”

“Hmm, two weeks from now.”

Two weeks!? That was soon!!

I didn’t know that.

Why wouldn’t Nigel tell me about his birthday when it was that soon?!

Well, he probably didn’t want to spell it out because it would have made him sound like he was begging for a present...

*That’s it!*

“It might be a good idea to prepare a present for Nigel!”

Or rather, I should.

Birthdays only happened once a year to someone. It was a special day—the day that person was born.

Nigel was the prince of a kingdom.

Of course, a grand party would be held and there’d be lots of eye-catching gifts...

...I wanted to secretly join and sneak my gift in...

“Cecily-chan, thank you for sharing such important information with me.”

“You’re welcome.”

When I bowed my head, Cecily-chan laughed happily— *was it something I said?*

“Now that you know about it, what will you prepare as a gift?”

*I wonder about that, too.*

I wanted Nigel to be happy by what I gave him.

“Do you perhaps know anything that Nigel might want?”

When asked that, Cecily put her hand on her mouth and pondered.  
“Hmm.”

“My bBig Bbrother rarely wants anything, he also doesn’t care about anything luxurious. It’s hard for Cecily to say...”

“He’s such a good person...”

Or rather, from the standpoint of a prince, he’d probably get whatever he wanted, whenever he felt like it.

Well, not indulging in such desires was one of Nigel’s good traits.

However, in this case, said good trait of Nigel was troubling for me.

*What should I give him, then...?*

When I was worried, Cecily-chan suddenly said, “Oh!”

“He likes sweets. If you want to give him a present, maybe you can give him sweets.”

*Pikin.*

At that moment, it was as if my eyes had shone.

“For him to enjoy sweets, who would’ve thought that Nigel has such a cute side to him, too.”

“That’s right, mom used to make cookies and so on for us. Cecily loves sweets, too!”

By the way, Nigel’s mother... His Majesty’s wife seemed to have passed when they were young. The cause was apparently of illness.

Cecily-chan was too young to remember about the details.

“I see... well, that’s enough information. Thank you very much, Cecily-chan.”

“Again, you’re welcome~”

Cecily grinned.

Because of their late mother, they grew to love sweets...

I had decided. I shall give Nigel homemade cookies as a birthday’s present.

If such was the case, it wouldn’t be considered heavy. Nigel shouldn’t

feel pressured upon receiving such a gift.

“Now that I’ve decided, time to think about what to prepare.”

Fortunately, I was granted permission to use the kitchen the other day.

Let’s cook the cookies secretly so Nigel wouldn’t know about them. It was supposed to be a surprise, anyway.

“Let’s prepare the ingredients.”

If I went to the city, I should be able to procure the ingredients.

After a long time, I finally was able to go shopping—I was excited.

# Chapter 30

## 30. Shopping at the Market

In order to give cookies to Nigel, I must first procure the ingredients in the city.

Thus, I went to the most vibrant market in Lynchgiham.

“It’s cheap, it’s cheap! A tomato is 50 bells!”

“Look! Fresh eggs available!”

“Hey, the lady over there, would you like to take a look inside our store?”

Merely by walking, the store clerks called out to me one after another.

“This liveliness is the real thrill of the market!”

I had wanted to visit for a long time, but I couldn’t.

Most of the shop items were available at reasonable prices.

Some people might think it a little inappropriate to give the first prince cookies.

However, there were some unexpected bargains in that market.

Some people could be selling suspicious, fraudulent, products, though. I had to be careful.

From that point on, whenever I helped preparing meal for Nigel and the castle’s inhabitants, I received payment. I considered that pocket money.

At first, I refused, but Nigel urged me to receive it as thanks for making such wonderful dishes.

Hence why I had enough money to buy ingredients for making cookies.

However, when I went to a high-class shop for aristocrats, I found out that a box of butter was being sold at the price of 100. 000 bells.

If I were to shop there, I'd go bankrupt.

"Well, this place seems good enough."

I stopped in front of a certain store.

"My, young lady, how beautiful you are. Are you perhaps a noble?"

A person who seemed to be the clerk greeted me.

However, an uncle came from behind the store and immediately dropped a fist on the clerk's head.

"What a foolish thing to say! As if a noble would step foot inside a store like this!"

"T, that's right..."

"No matter how beautiful a woman is, you mustn't flirt with them! Work properly!"

Was the uncle the manager of that shop?

The clerk, who got scolded, clicked his tongue— "*Tch.*"

"Then, young lady, why not take a look around? For someone as beautiful as you, there might be something worthwhile in this store."

When the clerk ran his mouth again, the store manager uncle glared at him from behind.

"I will, thank you."

Seeing that, I was amused and chuckled a little.

Well, I should focus.

Oh, I should also put chocolate in the cookies. It might be a good idea to use the opportunity to make chocolate cookies.

...Or caramel.

My, I've been swept by the atmosphere again.

Well, it would be better for Nigel to enjoy various flavors rather than just one.

I scanned through the products and bought what I needed.

“Thanks for stopping by!”

By the way, I seemed to have bought more than what I had intended. Luckily, my limited budget was enough.

“Should I buy butter?”

I went to another store and bought another ingredient.

There were many friendly shop clerks, and I was able to enjoy shopping for the first time in a long while.

Before I noticed it, I had moved from one end of the long market to the other.

“I’ve procured enough ingredients... I should return soon...”

It was when I was about to head back.

“Hmm?”

I halted.

Perhaps to attract tourist, that market was located right after the main gate of Lynchgiham.

I could see the main gate of Lynchgiham from there...

“It seems that something has happened...”

The gatekeeper was arguing with a man.

“If you don’t have a permit and money, you can’t enter Lynchgiham.”

“Why is that so? Normally, I enter from the sky. Now that I’m entering from the entrance in a well-behaved manner, you don’t even respect that?”

Apparently, the man the gatekeeper was arguing with wanted to enter Lynchgiham.

“What happened?”

Originally, I didn’t intent to poke my nose where it didn’t belong.

The gatekeeper was just doing his duty. It would be a problem if I, an outsider, got involved.

But I just felt that I must do something...

For some reason, I felt like I knew that man who was arguing with the gatekeeper.

I wondered why?

Even though that was supposed to be our first meeting...

“Alright, let’s just listen to the full story, first.”

I went to the main gate.

“Uh, what happened?”

I talked to the gatekeeper.

Then the gatekeeper remarked, “Ah!”

“You’re Eliane. Long time no see, do you still remember me?”

“Of course I do. You’re the first person who greeted me when I came to Lynchgiham.”

“It’s an honor to be remembered by an acquaintance of Nigel.”

Even though I never asked for your name...

“It seems like you’re arguing about something, can I hear the details?”

When I asked such, the gatekeeper seemed troubled.

“Well, this guy seems set upon entering Lynchgiham. Originally, all outsiders have to purchase an entry permit or pay an admission fee of 50.000 bells. It seems that he doesn’t have either. I can’t let such a suspicious man enter, it wouldn’t lead to anything good.”

The gatekeeper’s explanation was sensible. The man trying to enter the city was the one at fault.

“Excuse me, but you...”

For the first time, I glanced at the man’s face.

Tanned skin.

The face wasn’t only full of confidence, but dignified, as well.

He was also quite a good-looking man.

If I had meet him before, I doubted I'd have forgotten about it.

I thought that it was indeed our first meeting.

However, my doubt remained.

Nevertheless—

“—It has been a long time, Eliane.”

The man casually spoke to me, as if we were old friends.

“Who are you?”

“It's me, for you to forget about me... it makes me lonely, you know?”

The man expressed his displeasure.

Even though I didn't know such a man—hmm, wait a minute?

The man's magical power...

...could it be—



# Chapter 31

## Being Reunited After a Long Time

“Y, you’re the dragon from that time?”

I screamed at the man.

*...Huh?! Oops!*

“...Dragon?”

The gatekeeper shot me a suspicious glare.

“N, no! I was mistaken! This person is...”

*“...This person is???”*

I pointed my finger at the ‘man’ and continued.

“A dragon researcher—! In the city where I used to live, this person was researching dragons. Hence why, I nicknamed him ‘Dragon’, I call him that all the time, so out of habit, I—...”

To be honest, I thought it was a lame excuse.

I didn’t expect to meet him in such a place ...I couldn’t help but become flustered.

However, the gatekeeper—

“—Ooh! Is that so? You’re the acquaintance of Eliane?”

It seemed that I had successfully convinced him.

What a relief... it seemed that the gatekeeper wasn’t the type to dwell on things...

“I’m not a dragon research— *ngugugu*—”

Before the man could utter anything outrageous, I closed his mouth and stepped away from the gatekeeper.

“...Why are you in such a place? Other than that, your form is... that of a human?”

I whispered so the gatekeeper wouldn't hear us.

That was right.

*This man...* or rather, the dragon was one of the few people I talked to back in my former kingdom.

—in my former kingdom, where I was basically imprisoned in the castle.

During my free time, I'd often find any means of distraction—after all, I couldn't go out.

One of those said distractions was telepathically conversing with someone.

However, there were quite a few people who could converse through mind with me. It was because they had to have enough magical power to receive my telepathy.

It was something I did to kill time... *nevertheless*—

*“—Who is this? Who is the fool who tries to converse with me through such a method?”*

—I received a response.

I was surprised—after all, all that time, no one could hear my telepathy.

I immediately started to communicate with that person.

*“Who are you?”*

*“Me? It's fine for you to be amazed once you hear the answer. I'm the champion of the world—a dragon.”*

I felt that the dragon was very excited.

No—I couldn't see the appearance of the other person through telepathy, I could only sense them.

Therefore, I thought he was joking about being a dragon.

But as I continued to talk to him, I realized that he really was a dragon—it wasn't a joke.

Apparently, the dragon also had free time in his hand. We weren't merely pen pals—but '*mythical friends*'. More often than not, we spoke about love.

"Please listen. My fiancé, Prince Claude, loves to stare at me as if I'm filth."

*"Fumu. I've been thinking for a long time—but the guy named Claude sure is trash. I honestly understand why you're so rattled by him."*

At first, I was wondering if he was a scary dragon, but I was surprised. After we talked, he turned out to be a good listener. He was easy to talk to.

...Thus, time advanced to the present.

That was right—when I was exiled from the kingdom, I forgot to tell the dragon...

Who would've thought that we'd meet again in such a place?

"If I were to assume my true form, there's no way I'd be allowed into the city. I transformed into a human figure to avoid any confusion."

*I see.*

The dragon's reason was indeed plausible.

But... *why did you have to transform into such a beautiful boy!?*

Talking to such a handsome guy, there was no way I wouldn't get nervous!

"By the way, Eliane, you sure uncovered my true identity quite fast."

"Naturally. someone who possesses such a huge amount of magic like you is rare. I'm good at distinguishing individuals and beings with magical power."

"Is that so."

Hmm... it was still hard to believe, but as I thought, he was indeed the dragon.

Although he had suppressed his magic—perhaps due to the form he had assumed—magical power was something that couldn't be changed easily.

“Well, back to my original question—why are you here? Didn’t you live in a dragon’s nest near the kingdom?”

“Well, you see...”

The dragon told me his brief story.

Apparently, after I was banished, the dragon noticed that the kingdom’s barrier had disappeared and went to check the situation.

After confirming that I had indeed been banished, the angry dragon decided to travel around the world as a means of distraction...

Since he was a dragon, it was possible for him to fly around at a high speed.

*He easily decided to travel the world as if he were deciding what to have for dinner or something...*

“As I passed by, I noticed a city that had been completely covered by a barrier. Only Eliane can create such a barrier.”

“Oh... is that so?”

I never thought my barrier would yield such an outcome.

“But Dragon, I’m glad to see you for the first time after such a long while. Above all, I’m glad you’re doing well.”

“That’s my line.”

But... the dragon, my friend, was such a fine-looking young man—even though it wasn’t his true form.

I felt a little confused.

“That’s not the only thing that has happened. Eliane, after all this time, why don’t we talk? There’s a continuation to my previous story...”

“Fufu, is that a pick-up line?”

“Pick-up line...?”

“It’s an act of inviting a girl you like on a date.”

After meeting the dragon for the first time in a while, I was in a good

mood.

Hence why I made such a joke.

However, the dragon's expression didn't change in the slightest.

"Hmm... I see, the girl I like. Then, there's no mistaking it—it's indeed a pick-up line, because I like Eliane."

He said something out of the ordinary.

Eh? The dragon? Towards me???

What was I thinking!?

Even though his appearance was that of a handsome guy, the man before me was still a dragon! In the first place, our races were different!

I was sure what he meant by that was he liked me as a conversation partner.

"T, thank you. Well, since the dragon has gone out of his way to invite me, what can I do..."

I managed to reply.

Deep breaths, deep breaths!

Regain your composure!

"However, it's impossible to find a suitable café."

"Why?"

"Well, you aren't human, and there are a lot of other things as well..."

No matter how good of a dragon he was, I couldn't let him enter the city just like that.

"I'll first ask Nigel."

"Nigel? Who's that?"

"A reliable person."

I owed Nigel, and there was also nothing I could conceal from him.

Even so, what kind of face would Nigel and the dragon make once they saw each other?

Since it was him, I didn't think anything outrageous would happen if I explained the situation carefully.

I left the gatekeeper with the dragon for the time being and returned to the royal castle.

# Chapter 32

## New Resident

In the royal castle.

“Who would’ve thought a dragon would come...”

To receive Nigel’s permission, I returned with the dragon.

“*Umu*. Quite a neat room—I like it.”

The dragon, who had assumed the human form, was relaxing on a sofa with his leg crossed—even though he was before the prince.

Well, it couldn’t be helped.

A creature like a dragon wouldn’t bow to a mere human prince.

“The situation is as I’ve explained... well, I just thought that I needed to bring this matter to you.”

“I know, good call, Eliane. But... a dragon? A dragon, who would’ve expected...”

Nigel was fumbling—he kept repeating the word, ‘dragon’.

That couldn’t be helped either.

Originally, a dragon was a creature which brought disaster to humans.

It seemed that in certain territories, dragons were worshipped as ‘gods’ due to their sacred and mighty power.

“Anyway, is that person really a dragon? You said he assumed the form of human, but to me, it doesn’t look like that.”

Nigel stared dubiously at the dragon.

The dragon showed a dissatisfied expression,

“Hmm? So, you’re basically saying that I should return to my original form? Now that I’m inside the barrier, something like that shouldn’t be hard—”

“— *No, don’t!*”

Because the dragon had said something ridiculous, I stopped him in a hurry.

“What are you talking about!? If you return to your original form in such a place, not only would the castle collapse, the city will be in a big panic!”

“Just kidding. Doesn’t matter whether or not I’m inside the barrier, I’m still in your presence, Eliane. I won’t do anything bad.”

The dragon smirked.

... *Good grief*, I noticed it when we first started talking, but that dragon sure was a mischievous one.

It was a little annoying that I couldn’t keep up with his pace.

“Well then, Eliane, what is the best action for me in this kind of situation...”

Nigel shrugged.

“Maybe, you can give the dragon a permission to enter city—even though he’s already inside...”

I looked back at the dragon.

“What about you?”

“*Umu.*”

The dragon put his hand under his chin and pondered.

“Let’s see, all I wanted was to see Eliane, I didn’t think that far ahead...”

“That’s surprising, coming from you.”

“Shut up. Oh well, I’m tired of traveling around the world, and was planning to return to my nest... *but—*”

The dragon lifted his face and stared at me.

“Eliane, will you continue to talk to me through telepathy?”



“From here to your nest? Since your nest was close to my former kingdom, it wasn’t hard to do. But now that I’m in Lynchgiham, it’s really difficult...”

“...As I thought. So, once I return to my nest, I’ll be bored as hell...”

Then the dragon clapped his hand, “That’s it!”

What came next, was something outrageous.

“Should I live in here, too?”

“Huh?”

“Then I’d be free to talk to Eliane. Of course, not in this royal castle, but a suitable house in the city. If that won’t work, the field is fine with me. This is what I want.”

...*What is this guy saying?*

Can dragons live alongside people?

I had never heard or imagined such a story.

Well, I was happy to see the dragon again, but that was just too surreal.

“Nigel, of course that won’t do, right?”

“Hmm? I don’t think there’s a problem with that?”

For a moment, due to Nigel’s immediately reply, I almost fell backwards.

“It’s fine!?”

“Isn’t he your trusted friend, Eliane? Helping the people in need is one of Lynchgiham’s principles. If the dragon is in trouble, of course I can’t overlook him.”

Nigel continued to eye the dragon with interest.

...That was right, Nigel was that kind of person...

To be honest, I thought it was unreasonable.

However, my presence was also unreasonable, and yet I was still

allowed to stay in that kingdom.

It also didn't make sense to reject the dragon just because of his race.

"My, aren't you quite an open-minded fellow? Of course, I won't freeload. Should this kingdom ever face any conflicts, I shall lend a hand."

"I'll be in your care."

Nigel smiled.

*I see.* He had considered it to that extent.

As I had said many times—he was the first prince, the man who would carry the future of Lynchgiham on his back.

Of course, he was also a good person—after all, he decided to help the dragon. It's just that along the way, he had also decided the dragon would be a useful force.

That kingdom didn't invest much in its military, their taxes were spent elsewhere.

Hence why, having a dragon would surely outweigh the disadvantages.

"If Nigel says so, I understand— *however!*"

Sighing, I pointed at the dragon.

"You must always remain in your human form! Otherwise, you'd cause a great panic!"

"Of course."

Besides, if he stayed in his human form, his enormous magical power would be cut to one tenth of the original amount.

It also meant suppressing his power.

"One more, as soon as you do something bad, I won't overlook it! After all, Nigel has trusted me. At the very least, I have to do this much!"

"I understand. Besides, it's not like I'd attempt anything outrageous in a kingdom where you're located, Eliane."

The dragon smiled fearlessly.

Did he truly understand what I was saying...?

Well, essentially, the dragon was good-hearted. I didn't think anything bad would happen.

"You've heard him, Nigel."

"Got it. I will relay this to my father. I wonder what kind of face will he make."

Ugh... I felt like I kept imposing troublesome things on Nigel.

Fortunately, he received it well—however, someday, I must return that favor.

But, when would that day be?

"Then, calling you, 'Dragon' wouldn't do. Let's decide on a name."

"A name... I feel like a human being. Well, whatever—feel free to decide."

Hmm... I crossed my arms and started thinking.

Unexpectedly, a name came to me—

"—Douglas, how about Douglas?"

"Got it. My name's Douglas—I will remember it."

The dragon—or rather, Douglas, rested his weight on the sofa—he looked happy.

The dragon had become a new resident of Lynchgiham.

# Chapter 33

## The Dragon and the Fenrir became Good Friends

Douglas, the dragon, would live in the royal palace just like me for the time being.

After Nigel consulted the king, it seemed that a house for Douglas would also be prepared at a later date.

However, since it was also very sudden, it was decided he would remain in the royal palace.

Douglas's respond to that was,

"I'm fine living anywhere. Speaking of luxury, it's tiring to remain in human form, Maybe I should revert back to my original—hey, hey, Eliane. Don't stare at me like that. I'm merely kidding. While I'm in this kingdom, I shall remain in the human form—so lower the frying pan in your hand."

I was happy that he was convinced (?)

"I never thought that I'd end up living with a dragon..."

As I walked down the hallway leading to the courtyard, I sighed.

"I hope Douglas doesn't do anything unnecessary..."

"Who would do anything unnecessary?"

Suddenly, a voice came from behind. I screamed, "*Kya—!*"

"Douglas! You surprised me!"

"I surprised you? Didn't mean to do that. I just wanted to see Eliane's reaction, so I erased my presence and approached you."

Douglas laughed cheerfully.

...Ugh!

He was so mischievous!

"Where are you going?"

“I’m on my way to feed my pet Fenrir.”

“*Nanu*, Fenrir? Fenrir may be a beast, but aren’t they divine creatures? Human made such things their servant?”

“Not servant, *pet*.”

“What’s the difference?”

Douglas shook his head.

“Would you like to come with me?”

“Oh, that sounds good. I heard that Fenrir are a noble race. He might get along with me.”

It was apparent that Douglas was in a good mood.

I was worried about leaving Douglas alone, so I decided to keep him close.

Before I knew it, I had become Douglas’ guardian.

We moved to the courtyard. I felt a dull pain in my head.

*“Eliane, you’ve come. Where’s the piece of the golden tree?”*

When Ralph-chan tried to approach me while waving his tail—

*“—what is a dragon doing in a place like this?!”*

Ralph halted and uttered to Douglas.

“Ralph-chan, you can recognize dragons immediately?”

*“Obviously! Dragons possess sacred magical power which is incomparable to humans. Even if he tries to disguise himself, Ralph won’t be deceived!”*

‘Gururu...’ Even though Ralph-chan attempted to intimidate him, Douglas only showed a generous smile.

“Hahaha, what a ferocious Fenrir. I like it— *Thou* shall be my playmate.”

*“Who do you think you are!?”*

Ralph stayed wary.

However... Douglas received the piece of the golden tree—sorry, katsuobushi from me.

“Here, Douglas, please get along with Ralph-chan.”

“What’s this?”

“Ralph-chan loves it. Present it to him as a proof of comradery.”

“I don’t think a Fenrir would appreciate such a terrible gift...”

Douglas stared at the katsuobushi confusedly.

*“You’re wrong! Fenrir, a noble race, has penchant for the piece of the golden tree! Just leave it there and I will take it!”*

Even though Ralph-chan was still hostile—I saw it.

Ralph-chan who saw the katsuobushi was already wagging his tail.

“Douglas.”

“What?”

“Throw the katsuobushi into the distance?”

“Like this?”

Douglas threw the katsuobushi with a light movement—  
—however.

*Pyun.*

The katsuobushi soared high into the sky with such a noise.

As it was, the katsuobushi flew high and then disappeared.

*“Wan!”*

Ralph-chan howled.

Eventually, the katsuobushi slowly descended and was about to land before Ralph-chan.

However, Ralph-chan was a Fenrir.

Before the katsuobushi could land, Ralph-chan had already caught it

in his mouth with a quick movement.

*“Fufufu, for some reason, it’s exciting. Ralph will appoint you as my Katsuobushi-Fetcher.”*

Full of joy, Ralph-chan chewed on the katsuobushi—

—it was surprisingly easy to win his heart.

More importantly,

“Douglas! You didn’t have to throw it that high!”

“Haha, forgive me, I don’t know how much power I’m supposed to use. At least, I tried to throw it lightly, right?”

Note that Douglas didn’t show any remorse.

After that, we were relaxing and basking in the sunlight with Ralph for a while...

“...Huh, is that Abby?”

She was in the corridor between the buildings.

Abby walked down the hall with many books.

“Looks heavy...”

The books were even swaying!

...I was worried.

“Douglas, I’ll head there.”

“*Umu*. See you, Fenrir.”

*“Don’t forget to bring katsuobushi again.”*

After waving to Ralph, we sprinted to Abby.

“Abby, what are you doing?”

“That voice... Lady Eliane?”

Due to the mountains of book, Abby was unable to see me.

“Yes, it’s me.”

“I’m sorry, I can’t talk now. I need to bring all these books to Nigel, I can’t afford to talk...”

As Abby spoke, I could feel her hardship.

“I’ll help you. Let me carry some of the books.”

“No, I can’t allow a guest to do that...”

That being said, as if I could overlook such a thing.

When I received some books from Abby and tried to carry them—

“—What, you should be able to do this kind of thing yourself, right?”

Douglas snatched Abby’s books.

Moreover—only with one hand! No, one finger! He balanced all of the books on top of his index finger!

Although they were swaying, the books didn’t collapse.

Along with power, his balance was also great.

“T, thank you very much.”

Abby thanked him, although she was still stunned by his display of power.

Well, that was only natural, wasn’t it?

I didn’t think Abby had yet been informed that Douglas was a dragon...

“Alright, let’s go. Nigel is the man I met yesterday, right? To give such a heavy task to a woman, what kind of man is he?

He’ll be hearing my thoughts.”

Douglas walked as he was.

Although he was carrying those books, they didn’t appear heavy at all. As expected of a dragon. No matter how much his power had been suppressed, his strength was still incomparable to that of humans.

“D, Douglas, wait a minute! I will go with you, too! Abby, you come too!”



“Okay!”

In the first place, Douglas wouldn't know where Nigel was.

Besides, something was amiss.

But I agree with what Douglas said.

Let's reprimand Nigel a little.

# Chapter 34

## Douglas is Selfish

When we entered Nigel's room, Nigel was surprised to see us for some reason.

"T, those are...?"

Without answering Nigel's question, Douglas quickly laid a pile of books on the table.

"Here, don't have a delicate woman carry such a heavy thing. Any gentleman would suffer a heart attack if he were to heard of this."

As Douglas said so, Nigel's gaze found Abby who stood in front of the door.

"Abby... I remember asking for a document regarding the monsters in the vicinity of Lynchgiham?"

"Y, yes! Regarding monsters, right? Since Nigel said so, I thought you'd also like to investigate the various effects those monster have on the kingdom. With that in mind, I keep piling up more books..."

Abby bowed her head.

Apparently, Nigel was also surprised by her stacking that many books. It seemed that he expected a couple books at most.

"Abby, raise your head."

When Nigel said so, Abby lifted her face.

"Forgive me, I should've known that Abby is that kind of thoughtful person and who wants to aid me. I should've realized you'd bring this many—I'm sorry."

"P, please stop apologizing! For His Highness Nigel to apologize to me... I wouldn't know what to say!"

Abby was in a fluster.

Hmm... Nigel seemed to be properly reflecting on his action,

therefore, there was no need for me to preach.

Anyway, one case solved?

“Also, Douglas, even though you’re a guest, sorry for letting you do this kind of work. Thank you for helping Abby.”

“Don’t sweat it. Besides, the one who wanted to come to your room is Eliane.”

“M-me!?”

Due to the sudden mention, a strange voice came out of my mouth.

“Eliane is...?”

“D, Douglas, when did I say that!?”

“What? Didn’t you want to meet him?”

“I didn’t say that!?”

Douglas had a look of doing absolutely no wrong.

“*Kukuku*, why is your face bright red, Eliane? Do you have a fever?”

“!!”

That being said, I turned around and covered my cheeks with my hands.

My cheeks were hot.

“Haha, how lively. You really get along with Douglas.”

Nigel was smiling at us.

When it comes to Nigel, why do I always lose my composure?

I should’ve properly come with an explanation, instead of being provoked by Douglas!

“Eliane, I know Douglas is joking, but I’m glad you have that kind of intention. You can come to my room anytime you like?”

“T, that’s just inconceivable!”

Even though Nigel casually said so, he was still the prince of the

kingdom.

Back in my former kingdom, I was the fiancée of Prince Claude, but... he was the exact opposite of Nigel.

The proof was my pounding heart—I had never experienced such a sensation when I was with Claude.

“P, pardon the intrusion! I will excuse myself, Douglas, you too!”

“*Umu*, I agree. Well, pardon the intrusion.”

If we had stayed there any longer, I didn’t know what kind of thing Douglas would say.

I grabbed him by the collar and dragged him out of the room.



“What did you mean by that!?”

After leaving Nigel’s room, I confirmed that no one was around and asked Douglas in a strong tone.

“What did I mean by that...? Why are you asking me that? Nigel called my statement a, ‘joke’, but that certainly was not my intention.”

“Which means...?”

“You certainly wanted to see Nigel.”

Douglas concluded.

“W, what on earth makes you think that!?”

“So, you didn’t want to see him?”

“N, no, that’s not what I’m saying, but with the way you worded it, Nigel would misunderstand...”

The conversation became tedious.

While staring at me, Douglas put his hand under his chin, “*Hmmm...*”

He resumed. “As I thought, Eliane, do you like Nigel?”

He said something extraordinary.

“W, wha-!?”

I immediately tried to deny it.

“You see, I already know. I’m familiar with your thought pattern.”

“Y, you mean, like him as a ‘person’, right? If so, I certainly liked Nigel...”

“Don’t evade the question, of course liking him as a ‘man’.”

*Aaah! His eyes are beaming!*

Today, I kept losing to Douglas’ pace...

Who would’ve thought he was that kind of person...

“...Where did you obtain that knowledge?”

“From you. You loved to share your favorite romance novels with me through telepathy. That was fun.”

By the way, yes, that happened...

Even though there shouldn’t be any common ground with dragons, I told him about my favorite romance novels...

*Why is it so pleasant to tell others about what you like?*

“Isn’t it a good thing? Your life up to this point has been unlucky, I think it’s time for you to fall in love once or twice. It’s exactly like your favorite romance novel.”

“Even so, the other party is a prince... while my title as a saint has been stripped...”

“—More importantly...”

Douglas interrupted my words. His grinned in joy.

“I ship the two of you—I will be your cupid of love—no, dragon of love.”

“Huh!? Who asked for such a thing!?”

“Kukuku, well, I’m bored. What’s wrong with having fun?”

I desperately tried to stop Douglas, but he only smiled.

*This guy...!*

He did it purely out of his own interest!!

“Haaa...”

Before I knew it, I was sighing.

Even if I forcibly tried to stop him, it felt like things would only get worse...

No matter what I said, that guy would act as he pleased.

Indeed, a dragon was such a selfish being.

“Have it your way, but under one condition—you must never cause any trouble for Nigel! This one is absolute!”

“Of course.”

Seeing Douglas’ dubiously confident expression, I sighed yet again.

# Chapter 35

## A Date?

Douglas said he'd be the, 'dragon of love', but what was he planning, exactly?

The answer to my question came unexpectedly.

"Eliane."

When I was walking down a corridor of the royal palace...

Suddenly, Nigel called out to me from behind.

"Oh, Nigel, what's wrong? Quite a rare occasion for us to meet at such time."

"Indeed, I have something to request of you."

What was it?

When I nodded, Nigel turned serious as he said.

"Would you like to go to the city with me tomorrow?"

...Huh?

"W, what did you just say?"

"You didn't hear it? I asked if you wanted to go to the city tomorrow. The two of us will have plenty of fun together..."

...

*M-my goodness!*

*H, having fun? Just the two of us?*

*Why would the kingdom's prince request that of me?!*

"W, why so suddenly?"

"Haha, Douglas chided me not too long ago, that it'll be suspicious if a woman as beautiful as Eliane were to remain locked up in the palace.

As such, I have to occasionally take you out.”

B, but I wasn’t locked up!?

In addition, I often went shopping in the city to buy ingredients for cooking.

“I, I respect your consideration, that alone is enough...”

“That’s not all. Personally, I want to get to know more about Eliane.”

I looked closely at Nigel’s face—it didn’t seem like he was joking.

Even so, Douglas... he sure jumped into action fast.

Recalling his intention to become my dragon of love, I was sure that was the result of his action.

The face of Douglas, whom was winking as he said, ‘*Do your best,*’ came to mind.

“I’ve finished my work and can take a day off tomorrow. What do you think, Eliane? Are you willing to spend your day with me?”

Nigel extended his hand towards me.

Now that he had asked that, I had only one answer—

“—If you’re alright with me, I’ll be glad to accompany you.”

“That’s a relief!”

Hearing my agreement, Nigel beamed.

“Then, let’s meet in the courtyard at 10 o’clock tomorrow. We’ll slowly take a walk through Lynchgiam so you can get accustomed to the city.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

“Likewise.”

Nigel showed a handsome smile.

“Alright, I’ll be looking forward to our date tomorrow.”

After saying so, Nigel left.



“Who would’ve thought he’d ask me out...”

But, Nigel only did that because Douglas advised him such, right?

Not to mention, he was good looking.

For him to invite a girl out... shouldn’t he already be accustomed to it? Well, he had no fiancée, though...

While I was pondering, I suddenly recalled his last words.

*“Our date tomorrow.”*

*...D, date!?*

“B, but that’s actually not the case, right? It’s just two people hanging out...”

But if the two people were a man and a woman, and they were going to have fun in the city, wasn’t that basically a date?

However, I had to keep in mind he was a prince.

Even if he said it was a date, I mustn’t jump into conclusion.

“I must stop thinking about it! First thing’s first, I have to prepare for tomorrow’s outing!”

I shall talk with Douglas later!

I immediately returned to my room and started preparing for tomorrow.

By the way, when I consulted with Abby, she firmly declared that it was a date—however, that was a story for another time.

# Chapter 36

## The Glasses Wearing Prince is also Wonderful

The next morning.

My date with Nigel... or rather, sightseeing in the city. I was walking down the corridor that leads to the courtyard.

“I consulted with Abby and asked her to prepare clothes for me... I wonder if I look strange?”

Not knowing what I was supposed to do due to my lack of experience, I consulted with Abby.

She immediately rushed to help, “Leave it to me!” and prepared my dress for me.

Thanks to that, yesterday, I basically became a dress-up mannequin for Abby. But that also gave me a bit more confidence in myself.

When I reached the courtyard.

“Greetings, Eliane.”

Nigel had already arrived.

“Good morning, did I keep you waiting?”

“I’ve just arrived. Moreover, I was playing with Ralph. It didn’t feel like waiting in the slightest.”

Nigel smiled.

Even so... as usual, each of his movements was akin to that of a stage actor. His fingers were so thin, they could easily be mistaken as a woman’s—I was fascinated by them.

“More importantly, Eliane, what you’re wearing today—”

“—A, as I thought, do I look strange!?”

I leaned forward.

However, Nigel shook his head.

“It’s the opposite. You look so cute. You’re cute, no matter what you wear, I honestly think so—however, today, you’re even more so—it’s as if you’re sparkling.”

“T, thank you. Nigel also looks different from usual. Your current appearance is refreshing...”

Nigel always wore aristocratic formal wear, but he looked a little more casual, probably because he was going out.

Despite so, he was still neatly dressed—it suited the overall personality of Nigel.

Not to mention... Nigel was wearing glasses!

*Why does a man who doesn't usually wear glasses look cooler once he does?*

“Fufu, thank you. I was looking forward to today. I got a little enthusiastic.”

“Looking forward...?”

“Indeed. Isn’t it obvious? Who wouldn’t look forward to being able to go out with a beautiful woman like you? It would be strange if I wasn’t.”

*B, beauty!? Me!?*

N, no, no!

It was easy to misunderstand his words, however, I managed to prevent that from happening.

Aristocrats could flatter women as easily as breathing!

Despite so, I still felt better—after all, Nigel had praised me.

“Let us go.”

“Yes.”

In that manner, my sightseeing with Nigel started.



“Hey, hey, who is this beautiful couple?”

“That cool-looking guy... could it be, His Highness Nigel?”

“That’s just stupid! As if His Highness Nigel would just spend his time in such an ordinary coffee shop!”

“You’re right... but the woman is also very beautiful.”

“Totally, I envy the man...”

We decided to have tea at a coffee shop which also served lunch.

There were tables and chairs outside the shop, so we decided to sit there.

Nevertheless... I was restless!

“U, umm, Nigel...”

“What is it?”

“We’re being stared at...”

“Is that so? Well, it’s only natural for everyone to pay attention to a woman as beautiful as you.”

Nigel gracefully tilted the cup of tea to his mouth.

He was a person whom was accustomed to attention. I didn’t think it bothered him all that much.

I had a sandwich, tea, and cakes, but I was so nervous, they couldn’t get pass my throat.

“But, is it really okay for the kingdom prince to be in such a place? Some people are going to be suspicious...”

Nigel was dressed differently and disguised with glasses, so it seemed that people around him weren’t all too sure.

It should be fine, after all, we weren’t doing anything wrong—but, wouldn’t it cause trouble?

But Nigel showed a generous attitude.

“That’ll only happen if we behave suspiciously. If we stay relaxed, nothing will happen. Don’t you think so?”

He asked me.

“Y, you’re right... no one would think that the kingdom’s prince is right next to them...”

“Right?”

I felt uncomfortable, but I still enjoyed the conversation I had with Nigel.

“Ah.”

When I tried to eat the cake, I accidentally dropped the fork to the ground.

“My, it fell.”

“Forgive me...”

“Why would you apologize? We’re in trouble. It seems that the clerk isn’t nearby, I will call him in a bit.”

“Wait, you don’t have to go that far!”

When I tried to stop him, Nigel said it was okay and went to the store to find a clerk.

“He sure does as he pleases...”

While feeling remorseful, I was impressed with Nigel’s actions.

A nice man whom was cool and caring. There was no doubt he’d be popular.

Why didn’t he have a fiancée?

It became more and more mysterious.

“Hey, the lady over there.”

As soon as Nigel left his seat, I was approached by a trio of men.

“Who? Me?”

“That’s right. Why are you alone in a place like this? Why not come play with us instead?”

The men grinned.

Eh... maybe, that was a pick-up line?!

Even if the men had just arrived, couldn't they see the tea set across from me I wasn't alone by any means...

Are they stupid?

Or perhaps, did they wait for Nigel to disappear to approach me?

Their intention was malicious, then.

"No, I'm alright."

I told them off resolutely.

That kind of clear answer was for the best.

By flat-out refusing them, they should leave immediately.

However, the men were more persistent than I expected...

"C'mon, it's fine, quick, let's go somewhere."

A man forcibly tried to grab my arm.

"Please stop!"

When I shoo him off, the man distorted his face.

What do I do now?

It was possible to dismiss the men with barrier magic—however, it was a special occasion, I didn't want to make a fuss.

"Hehe, such a bold woman, however, I don't hate your type..."

The men were unscrupulous.

The moment they tried to grab my hand again.

"What are you guys doing?"

Someone stopped them—it was Nigel.

"I'm sorry, but she is my woman. Trying to reach out to her so casually like that, you don't expect me to be friendly enough to just do nothing, right?"

“Such a pathetic looking man dares to go against me!? You—I, it hurts!”

Nigel twisted the man’s arm by the joint—

—my, it seemed to hurt a lot.

“What do you think is going to happen? If you show hostility, then of course I’ll have to fight to protect myself.”

The man tried to twist his body, attempting to escape by force.

However, that didn’t happen.

“I, I understand! What a bummer! I give up on this young lady!”

“Really?”

When Nigel released the man, the trio fled.

“N, Nigel, are you hurt!?”

“Haha, I’ve been trained ever since I was little. It’s a royal technique taught by my father who always fights on frontlines.

I have mastered sword techniques and martial arts. That bunch is nothing to me.”

Certainly, judging from Nigel’s earlier movements, I didn’t think he learned it overnight—though not very much...

...I had just seen a new side of Nigel.

“Thank you, Nigel. Thanks to you, I was saved.”

“I’m sorry, you ended up experiencing such an uncomfortable situation... and even though I managed to chase those men away, I referred to you as my woman...”

“No! I don’t mind at all!”

When Nigel referred to me as his woman, I was actually happy.

Wasn’t that only natural?

For a man as nice as him to say such a thing to me—even if it was a lie, no woman would be unhappy with that.

“Even so, the security of Lynchgiham sure has deteriorated. I have to contact the related departments as soon as possible and try to tighten the security...”

“*Ara*, Nigel, you’ve returned to work mode. Let’s forget about that for now. Those type of people exist everywhere—I’m not bothered by it.”

“If you say so...”

Nigel and I smiled at each other.



# Chapter 37

## I'm Fidgety when I Enter a Jewelry Store

"Where should we go next?"

After leaving the coffee shop, we wandered around the city.

"Hmm... I've only just come to Lynchgiham, so I'm not sure. I'd be happy if you could recommend me some places, Nigel."

"Then, should we go shopping? I will introduce you to some of my recommended stores."

"Lead the way, then."

As I followed Nigel, we stopped in front of a jewelry store.

"Is it this place?"

"Yes, I often come here."

It was a very expensive shop!

Back in my former kingdom, I wasn't given much of a salary. I was having trouble doing away with my poor mentality.

But Nigel casually walked into the jewelry store, as if it were nothing.

Soon, I chased after him.

"Welcome."

As expected, expensive rings and necklaces were laid out in the store.

"They seem expensive..."

"Well, I rarely buy anything. After all, I can't waste the national treasury."

Despite so, as the first prince, surely, he mustn't appear shabby whenever meets important guests from other countries.

It was no wonder he knew of such a store.

“Looking at them just like this is also fun, isn’t it?”

“Indeed.”

I was a girl through and through—I longed for such beautiful things.

Despite so...

“It doesn’t have a price tag?”

“You have to ask the owner.”

A, ah, it was ‘that’, wasn’t it?! A scheme to incite buying without looking at the price tag!

In other words, only rich people came by, and they didn’t care about the price!

“What’s wrong, Eliane? You look really nervous...”

“T, that’s not true!”

That was a lie!

My legs were shaking!

Looking at such a me, Nigel shook his head.

“What do you think about this?”

Nigel picked up a ring which was on the shelf.

How dangerous!

Nigel continued, oblivious to the fact that I was inwardly harassed.

“I think it suits you.”

“Y, yes. I don’t know if it’d suit me, but it’s very beautiful, indeed... as a woman, I want it...”

Suddenly, I imagined how it’d be if Nigel gave me a ring...

...what was I thinking!?

Wasn’t that like choosing an engagement ring!?

“I see... Does Eliane like this kind of ring?”

“Nigel?”

When I called out to Nigel, who was seemingly pondering about something, he quickly put the ring back in its place, saying, “No, it’s nothing.”

“Um... but for some reason, I feel uneasy...”

It was fun to look at them, but being surrounded by such expensive things made me fidgety...

As I thought, that kind of store didn’t suit me.

I felt bad for Nigel, but I wanted to leave the store soon.

When I thought so and tried to talk to Nigel.

“Huh?”

I saw something.

“My, young lady, you have keen eyes.”

The owner of the jewelry store approached due to my reaction.

“This is...”

“Yes, it’s a necklace I just bought recently. Such a fine piece of jewelry, right?”

Certainly, as the shopkeeper had said, the jewels on that necklace looked expensive.

If someone were to wear it to a social gathering, that person would easily become the center of attention.

“Indeed, it’s definitely a good product.”

Nigel also looked at it.

“As expected of the woman brought by His Highness. She has eyes for identifying good jewels.”

The shopkeeper had a friendly conversation with Nigel.

It might have been obvious, but it seemed to be a well-known fact that he was the kingdom’s prince.

“You said you’ve just bought it recently?”

“Yes, a new merchant has appeared in Lynchgiham. I often trade with him.”

“A new merchant?”

Nigel furrowed his eyebrows.

“Indeed, although his identity is a bit vague, the quality of his merchandise is certain. I don’t even spend too much buying from him. There are many others who’ve been dealing with that merchant these days. Many stores are doing the same, too.”

“I see.”

Nigel listened to the shop owner and nodded.

I didn’t know much about jewelry, but judging from the conversation between Nigel and the owner, the thing itself was probably good.

However.

“Umm, can you listen calmly to me for a bit?”

When I said that, the two turned to me. “Hmm?”

“You should probably dispose of this necklace right away.”

“Why?”

“This necklace is cursed—the curse itself is a pretty strong one, too.”

# Chapter 39

## Cursed Necklace

A curse.

A strong grudge against another can create works of magic.

The curse was a difficult one for amateur's to notice. Furthermore, resolving it required a professional such as a saint or a curse remover.

"It's cursed? Haha, young lady, you sure have a sense of humor."

But the shopkeeper didn't take my words for it.

"I've been a jewelry store owner for a long time, and I've encountered many cursed jewels. If it truly were cursed, of course I'd be able to tell."

"Then, can't you tell that this necklace is cursed?"

"What did you say?"

The shopkeeper's eyes widened. However, it didn't seem that he was convinced, yet.

"Nigel."

"I understand."

But there was someone who believed me—needless to say, Nigel.

He turned his keen eyes onto the necklace.

"For this necklace to be cursed... it sure doesn't seem to be the case."

"Nigel, you shouldn't casually touch it. The curse could just as well spread to you."

"That's right, excuse me."

I stopped his hand which was reaching for the necklace.

"It's no wonder you didn't notice it. It's a strong curse... and also cleverly disguised. It's almost impossible for a normal person, or even

a professional, to identify it.”

But my eyes could clearly pick up the terrifying aura leaking from the necklace.

I had seen it somewhere... where was that...

“This incident is similar to Ralph’s curse from that time. Why would such a strong curse be applied to this...”

Nigel’s words reminded me.

That was right—Ralph-chan’s incident. The aura was very similar.

“Your Highness, is what the young lady was saying true?”

Did the shopkeeper finally noticed the tense atmosphere? He asked in dismay.

“Indeed. She’s a good healer—I’m sure she can see the curse.”

Not only was I a healer, I was also some kind of curse remover, now...

However, it could be said that saint was a being who could wield those two abilities.

“N, no way... for me to buy a cursed necklace...” The shopkeeper became stunned.

However.

“Don’t worry, if it’s such a curse, I can remove it immediately.”

I told the shopkeeper in a reassuring tone and put my hand on the necklace.

*Un...* it was an aura which made felt sick just by looking at it—I wanted to quickly get rid of it.

But that aura, I had certainly seen it before.

It was a different aura from Ralph-chan’s curse, but I was familiar with it...

“It’s done.”

After finishing my task, I turned to Nigel and the shopkeeper.

“You’re done already!?”

“Yes, the curse has been completely lifted. It’s just a normal necklace, now. I’m sure it’ll be a fine piece of jewelry on its own.”

“No, now that this has happened, I refuse to sell it anymore. It’s creepy, and I don’t want to cause any harm to my customers.”

“I see...”

Well, that would certainly be the safest choice.

It was an expensive purchase for the shopkeeper, but I was sure that store would quickly be able to recover the loss.

However, that didn’t mean the case was settled...

“That dubious merchant... we need to do some investigating.”

Nigel was contemplating while staring at the necklace.

“Shopkeeper, what can you tell me about this suspicious merchant?”

“Not much, actually...”

The shopkeeper started talking.

It seemed that the merchant had been visiting Lynchgiham for about half a year.

At first, he was too suspicious, no one dared to deal with him.

However, all the items brought by the merchant were first-class items, and the prices were also reasonable—thus, people started trading with him.

“Who is trading with him?”

“The weapon shop, armor shop, general store... it seems that the adventurer’s guild also traded with him. The merchant brings good quality monster meat, after all.”

“Monster meat-!?”

Nigel leaned forward.

“Yes, it’s normal for the guild to buy monster meat, right? After all,

that's what they use to reward the members..."

What the shopkeeper had said was a fact.

But between Nigel and I, it was a reveal.

"Maybe, the monster meat I gave to Ralph was cursed?"

"Yes, it's possible."

The monster meat purchased by the guild would have been distributed to another shop, from which the royal castle would make a purchase

---

—then, Ralph-chan ended up consuming it. That was a possible outcome.

"The situation may be direr than I expected. Thank you, Shopkeeper, I may come for more information on a later date."

"If it's only to this extent, it's nothing—b, by the way..."

"What is it?"

The shopkeeper continued, "It's purely an assumption, but I don't think that person is actually a merchant."

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe it's an adventurer pretending to be a merchant to do business with us. Those muscles, they don't belong to a merchant, and the way he does his business is amateurish. Well, there aren't many such merchants, but it's not uncommon, so take this with a grain of salt..."

"I understand. Thank you, I will properly look into it."

A fake merchant...

Well, things were getting more and more complicated.

But now, even though there were still a few loose ends, I felt that we had enough evidence.

All I had to do was to find that single thread connecting them all—I could feel it.

"Eliane, forgive me for allowing such a thing to happen during our



date... Let's cool our minds and continue shopping.”

“I don't mind.”

Although I was in thinking mode, the word 'date' which came out of Nigel's mouth immediately brought me back to reality.

# Chapter 40

## To Confess to Someone you Like

Afterwards, we had fun shopping for a while, then ate dinner, and returned to the royal castle.

“Today was fun.”

Nigel said so in front of my room.

“Thank you very much. Because of you, the day became worthwhile.”

“I’m glad you said that. Then, will you go on a date with me again next time?”

“Y, yes, of course.”

For a moment, I froze due to the word ‘date’, but I was getting accustomed to it.

“...”

“What’s wrong?”

I thought he was about to say some parting words, but something seemed off about him.

It was as if he was trying to express something.

“No, it’s nothing. See you tomorrow.”

“Yes, see you tomorrow.”

Waving, I entered my room.

I wondered what Nigel was trying to say—but I didn’t want to force him to say it.

“Fuu...”

I closed the door and exhaled.

Today was tiring... but also fun.

Such a dreamy day it was.

When I thought about it, I didn't know what I was thinking during the entire date. Most of the time, I was trying to not be disliked by him.

Reflecting on his small remarks, I was wondering about his impression of me.

"But... he said it was fun, so I can believe Nigel, right?"

I muttered to no one.

Anyway, today was really fun. I sincerely hoped to go out with Nigel again.

Alright, time to lie down and reminiscence about today!

It seemed that I would be reflecting a lot!

"Douglas, come out. I know you're there."

When I could no longer hear Nigel's footsteps, I uttered towards the door.

Then.

"You figured it out."

Douglas' voice came from the other side of the door.

When I twisted the doorknob and opened the door, the good-looking Douglas appeared.

"When did you notice me?"

"From the beginning! I can feel the lingering trace of your magic!"

"*Umu*, as expected of the former saint. Even though I used concealment magic, was it that easy to detect?"

Douglas nodded several times, as if impressed.

That was right.

Douglas was tailing me from the beginning to the end of today's outing!

"Haa..."

I exhaled another sigh.

“Why would you do that?”

“Because Nigel asked me to.”

Nigel...?

“Indeed. Because it’d be dangerous for the kingdom’s prince to roam the city without an escort, even if it was for an incognito date. I was there to prevent any danger.”

“Well, that’s true, but...”

It made sense. But for some reason, I still disliked it.

Nigel, out of everyone, why would you ask Douglas? Well, if it was him, all thugs would surely be beaten to pulp. But still, it was embarrassing... for Douglas to hear all of my remarks today...

“Well, indeed... an escort is necessary, but still, I feel like I was being deceived.”

*Aah... my head hurts.*

I wondered if Douglas was aware his action made me feel like that.

“I was worried when the two of you were in the coffee shop. Some guys tried to flirt with you. At that moment, I considered revealing myself and splitting them into eight pieces.”

He blabbered on proudly.

“They were just trying to flirt with me, was there a need to go to such length!?”

“Well, while I was pondering about that, Nigel came to your rescue. As such, it ended with nothing happening. The entire coffee shop became noisy, you know?”

That was only obvious. Everyone in the coffee shop saw it.

Which meant...

“...You also saw what happened in that jewelry store?”

“Of course. Human cursing other human through the means of a

necklace is just weird for me. Even though they are of the same race, why do they fight? I don't understand."

"I share your sentiment..."

"Even so, the curse of that necklace, it resembled that person's aura..."

"That person?"

"Never mind, I'm overthinking. Forget about it."

Saying so, Douglas waved his hand.

I wanted to pursue the matter, but it seemed like he wouldn't be speaking any further. Did he misunderstand something?

"Still, it seems like you had fun."

"Yes, it was fun."

"*Kakaka*, of course, I was the one who set it up. Shower me with more praise!"

"As if I would do that."

"Still, I'm dissatisfied..."

Douglas said without changing his expression.

"On today's date—there was one thing lacking, and I believe Nigel considered it, too."

"Eh? W, what was it!?"

I leant forward.

Even though I was planning to reflect upon today by myself...

I was curious about a bystander's opinion.

Douglas raised his index finger.

"There was no confession."

He said something extraordinary.

"C-confession!?"

“*Umu*. As far as I can tell, you like Nigel, don’t you? Why didn’t you confess? There were many chances to do it.”

“T, that’s... I...”

Do I like Nigel?

I didn’t understand...

It was enjoyable to be with him. My chest also pounded.

But, I couldn’t imagine building a happy family with him, probably due to the difference in our status.

For me, he was akin to an idol—he was out of my reach.

“Coming from me, it might sound strange, but if you do like him, just cut to the chase and confess.”

“B, but, hypothetically speaking, suppose I do like Nigel—I’m speaking tentatively, okay! What if he doesn’t feel the same? I might end up being disliked...”

“...? What are you saying?”

Douglas replied, truly mystified.

“If you confess to someone you like, why would you end up being disliked? I truly don’t understand humans.”

—...

Douglas must have been in utter confusion.

However, to me, that question of his was also too shocking.

“Well, whatever. You must have been tired from today’s outing. You should go to bed early. I will do the same.”

“G, good night.”

After seeing off the yawning Douglas, I closed the door.

“To a dragon, do humans appear like creatures who do everything in roundabout ways?”

I envied Douglas’ straightforwardness.

I laid down on the bed, but I couldn't get the words Douglas left me out of my mind.

# Chapter 41

## The Speculation of the Fake Saint

“This wasn’t supposed to happen...”

The kingdom of Verclaim.

In her room, Prince Claude’s fiancée, Leticia, muttered while biting her nails.

“As His Highness’ fiancée, I should be experiencing a fairy tale-like life...”

However, who would’ve guessed that a dragon would appear in the royal capital?

Even after the dragon left, the kingdom of Verclaim was still in the midst of turmoil.

No wonder.

After all, the proud soldiers couldn’t even stand up against a single dragon.

The dragon said that he didn’t care about that kingdom, but who knew when he’d appear again. First of all, he could be lying.

*“Strengthen the military! Don’t let that dragon step a foot on this land ever again!”*

The kingdom’s funding was already in a bad state. It was because Claude, the foolish prince, was so extravagant he used the national treasury as he pleased.

In the end, a large amount of money was invested in the military.

It might seem like Claude was unfazed—but in truth, he wasn’t.

He was merely scared.

*“...Hyii—! O, oh, it’s merely a dream. I thought the dragon had attacked again...”*



At night, Claude would suddenly wake up trembling.

Not just once, he'd usually wake up around ten times in total.

Prince Claude was born pampered. He had never been hit by a person.

However, the dragon's threat managed to sprout fear in his heart for the first time.

From then on, Claude was restless. When he was talking to Leticia, it was as if his mind was somewhere else.

"Because of that, I haven't received much of an allowance these days... I thought I'd be able to live more lavishly now that I've become Claude's fiancée."

Of course, the amount of money given to Leticia was too big to be called an, 'allowance'.

The money given to her in January was the equivalent of a small kingdom's national budget.

That was the reason why the kingdom's financial state was declining, but no one realized it.

"Excuse me."

While Leticia was thinking, the door was knocked and a person came in from the corridor.

"My, Alberto, isn't it rude to come into the room without my permission?"

"I'm on your side, be at ease."

With that said, the man called Alberto sat on a nearby sofa.

He was one of the few SS-class adventurers in that kingdom.

For certain purposes, he was working with Leticia behind the scenes.

*As expected of an SS-class adventurer, he managed to sneak in without being caught...*

Of course, the fact that Leticia was meeting Alberto in the first place was a secret to others.

She didn't know what kind of means he had been using to sneak in so far, but one thing was certain—it was unscrupulous by any means.

*I don't doubt his ability, but I wish he'd improve his personality...*

Leticia reluctantly joined hands with him—no, to be exact, she wanted to use his abilities.

“How is the *business* going?”

“It's in good shape. The products you've given me sell like hot cakes.”

“Fufu, that's good, then.”

“But why would you order me to do that? Well, you promised to turn me into royalty, there's that. Hence why, I have to pretend to be a merchant.”

Alberto complained.

He was greedier than anyone else.

The desire for wealth, authority, appetite, and even sexual—just to achieve those desires, he demonstrated his abilities to the utmost.

It could be said, that was how he reached the SS-rank.

Perhaps to compensate for that, he was lacking in a certain department—

—frankly speaking, he was stupid.

Leticia took advantage of that.

*Of course, the part about turning him into royalty is a lie—how foolish of him.*

Inwardly, Leticia smiled. Alberto didn't seem to realize her inner thoughts.

There were two things she was proficient at—

—the first one was lying.

She kept telling various lies up until that point just to approach Claude.

In the end, she managed to become his fiancée—at that point, there was no longer any need to doubt her lying skill.

—the other was cursing.

Leticia had a special origin.

Of course, no one knew about it.

With her power, she could curse an item with such a mighty curse, not even an SS-class adventurer would notice it.

“But why sell expensive items to Lynchgiham? Even though you said it’s for money-raising purpose...”

“How many times do I need to repeat it to you?”

“Because no matter how many times I hear it, it isn’t convincing in the slightest.”

“My answer won’t change. You have no right to probe. You just have to do what I say. Do you want to be royalty or not?”

“...Well, it’s not like I can figure out your thought process—it seems that I have no choice.”

He shrugged.

*He’s good at fighting, but the same can’t be said about his brain...*

*...That’s why you’re being taken advantage of, you know?*

It seemed that Alberto wanted to retire soon.

He was tired of his days of battle.

After retiring, he intended to become the member of the royal family and lead the same luxurious life as Leticia. What Alberto didn’t know was that dream would never come true.

“So... what’s the purpose of your visit. You have something to say to me, right? After all, you came without being summoned.”

“Indeed, that’s right.”

Alberto begun to speak.

“Previously, you’ve told me about Eliane, right?”

“Yes, that fake saint. She’s already been banished from this kingdom.”

“Or so I’ve heard, but that fake saint seems to be in Lynchgiham as of the present.”

“What did you say?”

For a moment, Leticia doubted her ears.

Despite so, she immediately regained her composure.

“...Well, who cares where that woman goes? It has nothing to do with me.”

That was what she said.

In all actuality...

*How troublesome...*

Leticia thought so inwardly, to the obliviousness of Alberto.

Eliane’s saint power was the real thing.

She didn’t expect Eliane’s barrier to be what was preventing the dragon’s invasion, but with the same power, Leticia’s true intentions might end up being revealed.

“Hey, Leticia, I’ve been thinking—is Eliane really a fake saint? The dragon invaded the kingdom right after she left, right? During that time, I was in Lynchgiham to fulfil your order, which was to sell the necklace. But, what if her power is real...?”

“Stop saying ridiculous things!”

Leticia raised her voice.

“I’m sorry for bringing up such an irrelevant topic. Well, indeed, it doesn’t matter whether she’s the true saint or not.”

Alberto gave off an eerie laugh, not knowing Leticia’s real thoughts.

“Oh, right, I heard something interesting regarding Eliane.”

“Something interesting?”

“Yes, apparently, Eliane is with the first prince of that kingdom—she was seen together with Nigel.”

“Huh?”

Involuntarily, she let out a stupid voice.

Leticia would never be able to forget what she had just heard.

More than when the news of the dragon’s invasion arrived, she doubted her ears.

“Indeed. Beautiful women sure have it easy. Even after getting banished from her former kingdom, she immediately started anew after merely meeting the prince of the other kingdom. I want to become a beautiful woman, too.”

“...”

Eliane... was seen together with Prince Nigel?

*That’s just ridiculous... no, that’s not the case. Alberto wouldn’t lie about this kind of thing...*

When she imagined the scene of Eliane and Nigel being intimate with each other, black emotions swelled inside Leticia’s heart.

*That’s it...! It’s Eliane’s fault! The dragon’s invasion, my plan going awry—it’s all her fault! Moreover, she trying to steal Prince Nigel from me!*

Leticia slowly stood up and picked up a sword in one corner of the room.

She hadn’t plan to resort to that method so soon.

However, when she heard about Eliane and Nigel, she wanted to just destroy her right there and then.

“Kill the fake saint with this.”

It was an eerie sword with a bright red blade.

“Can you do it? It’s part of the reason why I ordered you to pretend to be a merchant. On the possibility that this kind of thing might happen. It’s your time.”

“Hey, hey, I can’t just accept such an ominous sword...”

At that moment.

“W, what is this...!?”

A black aura rushed from Leticia’s sword.

The aura clung to Alberto and eroded his body.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

Alberto screamed.

Although he was suffering from the pain for a while, he slowly lifted his face—

“—Hahaha! That’s the best sensation in the world! I feel like I can do anything, now! I’ll kill the fake saint as per your wish!”

Screaming, Alberto received the sword from Leticia.

His eyes were gleaming red.

“Fufufu, good response, my cute little boy.”

Leticia smiled.

Her expression was glaringly malicious, there was no way it could’ve belonged to a true saint.

# Chapter 41

## Busy Morning

In the morning.

“How noisy...”

Something noisy was happening outside.

Because of that, I woke up a little earlier than usual.

Well, morning was indeed a busy period.

It might had been nothing... but I had a bad feeling.

“I should check it out.”

I immediately changed into my outerwear and went to the corridor.

The first thing I saw were the soldiers stationed around the royal palace moving back and forth along the corridor.

It wasn't that unusual, but it was hard to think that nothing happened.

“Excuse me... did something happen?”

“Actually, yes, something troublesome happened...”

“Something troublesome?”

“I'm sorry, but I shouldn't be saying anything more. Excuse me.”

That said, the soldier excused himself from my sight.

I tried to talk to the others, but everyone was busy.

“Should I ask Nigel instead?”

I might end up being a nuisance, but I felt like it was worth taking a look.

I went to Nigel's room. People were busy moving around.

“Nigel...”

“Ah, Eliane...”

When I arrived at his room, Nigel looked haggard.

“What’s going on? A soldier said that something troublesome has happened...”

“I can’t hide anything from you, it seems. In truth, a lot of monsters have appeared in the nearby forest.”

“A lot of monsters? That’s weird...”

“There’s no need for you to panic. The knights led by Adolf should be able to handle them, but...”

Nigel resumed talking with a serious look.

“The monsters are more ferocious than usual. The knights alone wouldn’t suffice...”

“Wait, that’s... what’s the cause of this?”

“I don’t know. However, the knights reported that the monster may have been manipulated by something. Monsters aren’t stupid. They know what’d happen to them if they were to blindly attack humans. They know how to choose their opponents.”

“With that said, the monsters are attacking indiscriminately?”

When I asked such, Nigel nodded.

“That’s right. Because of that, the knights have been in a fluster since earlier this morning. I’ve also arranged for adventurers, but it’s too late. Even if we have a barrier, if nothing is done, the neighboring cities and villages may get ransacked. Some adventurers and merchants are out of town. Now that the problem is this big, it can’t be overlooked.”

“Why is this happening... are there any clues? Not even a small one?”

“We don’t know for sure, yet. However, it may be related to the appearance of a man.”

“A man...?”

I wondered what kinda of man could be connected to this incident.



As if reading my mind, Nigel answered.

“Like with the monsters, the knights are having a hard time because this man is powerful. He carries a red sword and is commanding monsters to attack people. Although this man should be a human being, reportedly, he looks like a demon.”

“How mysterious... is it possible that this man is the leader of the monsters?”

“That’s too farfetched. Monsters don’t obey humans, except for Fenrir who are friendly to people. This man may as well be a monster, too. I suspect something has caused him to lose himself and turn violent.”

But what was that something?

What could cause both monsters and people to turn ferocious and insane...?

There was only one answer.

It was a ‘curse’.

The effects of curses were wide-ranging.

One effects could cause one to fall ill—just like Ralph-chan.

Another effect could turn someone insane and ferocious, just like a demon.

“Nigel, could it be...”

When I tried to tell Nigel about it, I saw his expression and realized immediately.

“...Are you keeping a secret from me?”

“...!”

When I pointed it out, Nigel’s shoulders stiffened for a moment.

“No, not at all.”

“Ara, you aren’t being honest, I see. Nigel and I are, so to speak, comrades. You don’t have to endure everything alone. I may be able to help you. Would you please tell me?”

At first, when I approached, Nigel refused to say anything.

However, he sighed, as if giving up.

“As I thought, I can’t hide anything from you. Alright, I will talk.”

He confessed.

“Actually, the man is making a certain request.”

“Request?”

As I tilted my head, Nigel continued.

“He wanted the saint—you, Eliane.”

# Chapter 42

## I don't Want to Burden Everyone

“Me?”

Nigel's words made me doubt my ears.

“Why would he ask for me?”

“I also don't understand. However, according to the report from Adolf, the man said, *“I condemn that fake saint!”* He was heard screaming, *“Hand me the fake saint!”*”

“—!”

When I heard the words, ‘fake saint’, my breath got caught in my throat.

I was the former saint of the Kingdom of Verclain. Here in Lynchgiham, Nigel, His Majesty the King, Ralph-chan, and Douglas should have been the only ones who knew that.

Moreover, the other person purposefully called me, ‘fake saint’.

That was just...

“A kingdom official—or someone who's quite close to the royal family. It's only natural to come to that conclusion.”

When I said such, Nigel nodded.

“There's no need for you to worry about anything, Eliane. You don't have to pay any mind to his request. We will handle it.”

Nigel was protecting me.

Certainly, adhering to that man's request was the equivalent of jumping into a frying pan.

Did he intend to bring me back...? That was certainly plausible. Despite so, I didn't think the discussion would play out peacefully.

At worst, I might die on spot.

However.

“Nigel, take me to that man.”

When I looked straight into Nigel’s eyes, he shouted. “N, no way!”

“There’s no need for you to do that! Eliane, if something dangerous were to happen to you, I wouldn’t know what to do. I beg of you, Eliane, stay here!”

He rushed to stop me.

Nigel was right.

Nevertheless—I was still the reason why that happened.

As long as I was in that kingdom, as much as possible, I didn’t want to be a bother.

Hence why.

“I’m not a shut-in princess. Nigel, let me ask you this—aren’t you struggling with both the ferocious monsters and that man? I’m sure my power as a saint will prove useful for you.”

“But...”

I persuaded Nigel, but he never nodded.

That was bad.

It seemed that persuading Nigel would be harder than dealing with the mysterious man.

When I was wondering.

“I’ve heard about what happened.”

*“Ralph, too.”*

Suddenly, the door opened and a person entered from the corridor.

“Douglas, and even Ralph-chan!? What happened?”

Indeed, the ones who vigorously entered the room were none other than Ralph and Douglas.

Douglas grinned.

“It seems that something interesting has happened. I immediately followed Eliane.”

*“Ralph is the same. But Ralph isn’t as curious as the dragon. I merely rushed here because I thought Eliane is in a pinch.”*

They were eavesdropping... such frivolousness...

However, that wasn’t important at the moment.

“Did it seem like I was planning to do something?”

“*Umu*. I can feel your concern—you don’t want to be a nuisance to this kingdom, right? Such a noble sentiment.”

Douglas said such and approached Nigel.

“Hey, Nigel, since Eliane is that determined, why don’t you send me with her?”

“What are you saying!? We mustn’t put her at risk!!”

“No matter how much you attempt to dissuade her, Eliane will surely abscond from the royal castle and head for the strange man by any means? If so, wouldn’t it be better to keep her under supervision?”

“W, well, that’s correct...”

Nigel faltered.

Me? Abscond from the royal castle? I wouldn’t be able to pull that off—not to mention, that’d also risk me being a nuisance.

“Douglas, you needn’t go that far—”

—however, when I gazed at Douglas, he winked at me.

For now, I had to match his story.

Thus, I added in.

“...Nigel, it’s exactly as Douglas has said. If you attempt to stop me, I’ll force my way out with the help of Douglas. Isn’t that right, Douglas?”

“Ha—! Exactly! Now, what are you going to do, Nigel? Let Eliane escape, or let me supervise her?”

When Douglas pressured him, Nigel raised his hands.

“...I understand. This is my loss, but Eliane, don’t leave me. That is one promise you have to keep.”

“Yes, of course I shall do that.”

Alright, finally, a starting point.

But how do I get to the man’s location?

According to Nigel, it seemed that there was a fair distance to the man’s place... but, should I head there in a carriage?

That might endanger the horses and the coachman...

As if Douglas had read my mind—

“—What are you hesitating for?”

“Kya—!”

He suddenly lifted me up.

“W, what are you doing—?!”

“Don’t thrash around. I’ll take you to the place where that man and the monsters are—won’t it be faster this way?”

It was as Douglas had said.

He may be in human form, but he could run about ten—... no, hundreds of times faster than that of an ordinary human.

Of course, if he were to revert back to a dragon, he’d be much faster, but have more difficulty controlling himself.

He could get there in no time—heck, he might even inadvertently miss the place. Hence, it was better to stay as he was until we arrived at that place.

*“Nigel can ride on my back!”*

Ralph turned his back to Nigel.

“...? Ralph? Are you telling me to ride on your back?”

Nigel slowly straddled his back.

Of course, Nigel couldn't hear Ralph's voice. It was unavoidable for that kind of exchange to occur.

If a Fenrir were to be serious, he'd be many times faster than a horse. Nigel straddling the fluffy Fenrir was a very cute sight, though.

"Let's go, Eliane, don't thrash around, alright?"

"O, of course I won't."

Although I might have been considered baggage by Douglas, it was also exciting to be held by such a handsome man...

...Of course, Douglas wouldn't realize any of that, which irritated me a little.

"Douglas, I'll be in your care."

"I know."

As he said so, Douglas kicked off the floor and started running.

# Chapter 43

## The Princess and the Prince

I was with Douglas while Nigel was with Ralph.

Cutting through the wind, we headed for the man who demanded for me.

“Hey! Douglas, aren’t you running too fast?! I’m really scared!!”

“Be at ease. You don’t want to waste time, right?”

Yes—! There was that, but—!

I was scared that at any given moment, I might fall.

“Ralph-chan! Nigel! Can you follow us!?”

*“Of course. He may be a dragon, but if Ralph becomes serious, it’s nothing difficult.”*

I wasn’t too sure because I was clinging to Douglas, but it seemed that Nigel didn’t have any problems.

When we first met, Ralph-chan let me ride him in the courtyard.

He was slow at that time, but now he was keeping up with us... as expected of a divine beast. He wasn’t merely fluffy.

In no time, we arrived at the destination—a forest.

“Adolf!”

Nigel dismounted from Ralph and called out to Adolf, the knight leader whom was waiting by the entrance of the forest.

“Y, Your Highness...”

The dandy uncle seemed to be really exhausted.

“How’s the situation?”

“There aren’t any casualties, yet. But the opponents are just too many. No matter how grave their injuries are, they keep attacking until they



die. The ones who don't feel fear are the scariest."

"I see..."

"Being honest, the knights are being pushed back. Some troops have retreated to the entrance of the forest. For now, we're still standing. However, at this rate, we may collapse all at once."

Apparently, Adolf and his troops were fighting to the last minute.

Looking around, there were injured knights lying on the ground.

The healers were also working at full capacity, but they just couldn't keep up.

"Nigel, shall I?"

"Oh, of course. I'm sorry, Eliane, but I'll be counting on you again."

"Leave it to me."

When I stared at Nigel, he guessed my intention.

*"Wide Heal."*

I extended my hand and casted healing magic on the surrounding area.

Then, the wounds of the knights whom had been suffering disappeared without a trace.

"Adolf, what about that man?"

While I was healing, I listened to the conversation between Nigel and Adolf.

"He's still asking for Eliane, he's screaming, 'fake saint' or something ridiculous like that, I wonder what..."

"That must be due to his confusion. What does the man look like?"

When Nigel asked, Adolf explained.

"I thought I had seen him somewhere... there's no mistaking it. He's Alberto, an SS-adventurer of the kingdom."

"What, Alberto? The one who is also hailed as the, 'Dark Emperor'?"

Are you certain?"

Alberto... I had only heard the name.

"Yes, because he's a greedy man, he has sometimes collided with my knights due to conflicting ideals."

"I see, then the situation is not good. After all, we're dealing with the Dark Emperor. Not to mention, he also has no fear... there's no way we'll let that kind of person take Eliane..."

I had finished healing the soldiers... what was Nigel talking about?

I broke in between Nigel and Adolf and stared straight into their eyes.

"Nigel, let me go."

"Eliane, no, it's too dangerous."

"I mustn't be a hindrance."

"Is it possible for Eliane to take care of Alberto alone?"

Nigel's question made me speechless.

I was a saint.

There was no way I could fight alone.

Therefore, if I were to go alone, high chance, I'd be killed.

"B, but—!"

I mustn't falter, I thought. Thus I squeezed my voice out.

"Hey, hey, Nigel, what are you saying? Isn't it the role of the prince to help the princess?"

A stunned voice.

Looking back, Douglas was trying to pressure Nigel.

"That's right, it'll certainly be difficult for Eliane to face that man alone. But what if you were to go with her? Eliane will be able to imbue you with the blessing of the goddess, amplifying your power."

Nigel didn't seem to understand what Douglas was trying to imply.

However, as if God had bestowed an oracle on his person...

“...I don’t understand what you’re saying.”

“Well, of course a foolish human wouldn’t understand. I wonder if it’s because of the wordings, basically...”

Douglas turned towards at the forest.

“My opponent is this one.”

*Zun—zun—*

Loud footsteps.

At the same time, a huge monster appeared from the depths of the forest, crushing all the trees.

A figure that overwhelmed its opponent through a mere gaze.

I... Nigel, Adolf, and everyone else knew what it was—

“—A *Behemoth!* ”

When I first met Nigel, he and the others were about to be attacked by a Behemoth.

It seemed that the Behemoth managed to get pass them and was lurking in that forest.

“...We’re finished.”

“Even though our hands are already full...”

“For a Behemoth to appear...”

Seeing the sudden appearance of the Behemoth, the knights were terrified.

However, a single, fearless, man stood in front of the Behemoth.

“Hahaha! You guys are scared of this pig?! Well, if it were the opposite, it’d be a little boring—Hey, pig, entertain me.”

Douglas beckoned to the Behemoth, referring to it as a pig.

“Eliane, Nigel, leave this one to me. The two of you should proceed into the forest.”

“But...!”

“You’re still hesitating!? Make up your mind!”

Douglas lightly poked Nigel on the head and continued.

“I’m saying that I’m giving the role of the prince to you! Make your way and save the princess! Become a man who can fulfil a woman’s selfishness to her heart’s desire!”

Due to the blasting, Nigel became stunned.

When he lifted his face, his expression was clear of doubt.

“...Eliane, let’s go. It’s exactly as Douglas has said—I wasn’t determined. But now, I’m prepared to lead the kingdom and also protect you.”

Nigel unsheathed his sword and held it before me.

“I’m the prince of Lynchgiham, and also your sword. I want you to help me.”

If only the situation were different, he might have come off as very romantic.

I noticed he was holding his sword with both hands.

“I understand, Nigel—then I’ll be your shield. Let’s head to that stupid man and end this fight.”

He said he’d protect me.

But at the same time, it made me think—

— *this person will never die.*

Such a strong determination.

“Oh... Is Nigel, who is touted as the child prodigy of Lynchgiham, finally swinging his sword seriously? If he hadn’t been a prince, he would have been the youngest knight leader of his time.”

Staring at such a Nigel, Adolf exclaimed so.

“Eliane, Nigel, ride on my back—wouldn’t that be much faster?”

“Can you carry two people?”

*“Who do you think I am? Ralph is a sacred beast. I’m not a mere dog!”*

...I was reminded.

As we rode on Ralph’s back, I clung to Nigel’s back.

“Then, Douglas, I’ll leave it to you!”

“Douglas, this is the outskirts. You can fight with all your might!”

Ralph started running, trying to pass by the Behemoth.

However, the Behemoth wasn’t so kind as to overlook us—

*“—Guooooooooooooo!!!”*

It screamed and raised his leg to trample us.

However.

“Your opponent is me.”

When its foot was about to be swung down, Douglas slid under it and caught the Behemoth’s foot with merely one hand.

“Because the saint has given me her permission, I shall return to my original form for the first time in a long while!”

It was Douglas’ voice.

Then, a scream occurred from behind us.

Without turning around, I could guess what had happened.

Douglas, who had returned to his dragon form, was probably trying to dig his fangs into the Behemoth.

Douglas had also said—there was no way that *pig* could beat a dragon.

Therefore, we could leave that place with peace of mind.

“It seems that everything will be fine, but who knows what might happen? We have to quickly get rid of the mysterious man and return to Douglas!”

“Yes! I agree!”

Riding on Ralph, we rode through the forest.

# Chapter 44

## Settlement

The deeper we went into the forest, the stronger the aura of the curse emanated.

“Ralph-chan! Over there!”

*“Leave it to me!”*

I gave instructions to Ralph, and we headed straight for Alberto.

Such a strong curse...

How much of a grudge did the cursed person hold?

Just by imagining it, goose bumps started to erupt.

Eventually, when I reached an open area in the forest...

“Kya—!”

“Eliane!”

Ralph suddenly jumped.

Due to that, we lost our balance and were separated from Ralph.

However, just before colliding with the ground, Nigel jumped off Ralph’s back and landed with me in his arms.

“Are you okay, Eliane?”

“Y, yes, thank you...”

I released myself from Nigel and stood firmly on the ground.

*“W, what is this!?”*

Ralph, who had gotten up, had a black aura attached to him.

Was that... a curse?

“Ralph-chan! I will help you right away!”

I held my hand to dispel the curse on Ralph.

Ralph slowly lowered himself to the ground.

“It seems that the leader has arrived.”

On the other hand, Nigel looked straight ahead while holding his sword ready.

“E, liane... kill, k... ill...”

In front of Nigel, there was a man carrying a blood-stained, bright red, sword.

The man, who seemed to be suffering from something, was clutching his head.

“Alberto!”

I called his name.

Apparently, the curse was attached to the sword.

However, the powerful curse had eroded the owner, Alberto, causing him to exude a black aura.

“Alberto, what the hell are you thinking!? What is your aim—...”

“Nigel, it’s useless. He has gone completely insane.”

Nigel was demanding an answer from Alberto.

Regardless, the curse latched on him was too strong and evil.

Moreover, the curse hadn’t only eroded Alberto, but also the monsters in his surrounding vicinity.

The monsters had probably become violent due to that curse.

“My head... is throbbing.”

As Nigel grew dizzy, his gait became uncertain.

It couldn’t be helped. We didn’t know when we’d be victims of the curse.

It didn’t happen because of a barrier I had prepared. Another reason was his strong will.



“Ralph-chan, are you alright?”

*“Yes, of course. However, for a sacred beast like Ralph, it’ll be difficult. I’m unsuited for long-term battles.”*

Ralph seemed to be suffering, too.

“It’s said that curses are more easily applied to people with darkness in their hearts. He probably succumbed thoroughly to the curse because his heart was already black from the start.”

I analyzed.

Even if I gave the explanation in a relaxed manner, the same couldn’t be said about the actual situation.

It seemed impossible to talk reason into him who had lost his sanity.

For starters, the red sword and the curse possessing him should be purified.

*“Gaaaaaa—!!”*

Alberto roared like a beast.

Then, he swung his sword, trying to attack me.

“Oops.”

However, Nigel jumped in front of me.

“Your opponent is me. I won’t let you lay a finger on her.”

He sparred with Alberto.

A fluttering occurred.

“Kuh...!”

However, Nigel was being pushed back.

Alberto’s ominous red sword approached his face.

“K, kill...!”

Alberto repeated that word while he attempted to slay Nigel.

“Nigel!”

I put my hand on his back.

“Starting from now, I’ll give you the blessing of the goddess.”

“Goddess’ blessing...?”

Nigel didn’t turn around as he ask me that question. He kept his gaze focused on Alberto.

“However, receiving the blessing of the goddess may be a little painful depending on the person’s abilities and character.

But I’m sure you can wield this power, so...”

“I understand, no matter what the consequences are, I shall endure them to protect Eliane. I can’t defeat this guy as it is—

Eliane, will you?”

“Yes!”

Nigel’s body was enshrouded in light coming from my hand.

The holy light cut through the surrounding darkness and permeated into the sky.

“Ha!”

Nigel uttered out and pushed Alberto back.

“Guh...!”

Alberto, who couldn’t withstand the force, steadily retreated from us.

“Is this... the blessing of the goddess?”

Nigel seemed baffled by his sudden burst of power.

—The gGoddess’ blessing and conformity.

As I had explained to Nigel, the blessing of the goddess hadn’t yet been given to anyone but him.

Those with wicked hearts wouldn’t be able accept the holy power and would only suffer.

However, because Nigel had a strong heart, the blessing of the goddess suited him.

I was the true saint.

I wasn't a fake one like Leticia.

Therefore, I was bestowed the blessing of the goddess.

With that power, I had mastered powerful healing and barrier magic, and had protected that kingdom—the Kingdom of Verclaim.

The purpose of my power was to protect people.

I myself couldn't fight, but I could temporarily strengthen the power of others by giving blessings.

Thus, the saint had another title—

—the agent of the goddess.

“Alberto.”

Nigel called out to him.

Holy light radiated from Nigel on to his surroundings.

To be honest, I hadn't expected that.

For him to be able to wield it to such an extent...

No matter how many times I give the goddess' blessing, it'd be meaningless if the other party didn't meet the requirements.

I heard that the stronger the will to protect people, the more powerful the goddess' blessing.

He was someone who'd reach out to people in need—such as Douglas and I, without hesitation.

As the prince of Lynchgiham, he had protected the fate of thousands—no, tens of thousands of people. So far, only he was able to master the blessing of the goddess.

...Thus,

“I'm not going to forgive the enemy of my kingdom, or my precious someone!”

“K, ill...!!!”

“You’re alone, while I’m supported by the saint, and also ten thousands of people—I, the sword which protects them, won’t lose to you!”

“Gaaaaaaaahhhhhh—!!!”

Nigel’s words probably couldn’t reach him anymore.

Alberto began to lost control and attacked Nigel.

“You drowned in power. Eliane is different from you. She has great power, but she uses it for others—the difference is too big.”

However, no matter how much Alberto attacked him, it was useless.

Because he no longer had any chance of winning.

“Haaaaa—!!”

Nigel swung his sword faster than Alberto’s sword could arrive.

It cut through the space.

A wave appeared and wrapped Alberto’s body in a flash of light.

Eventually, his scream stopped and he fell to the ground.

“Did we win...?”

I nodded.

Nigel warily approached the fallen Alberto.

The curse had vanished.

Alberto’s eyes were closed—he showed no signs of waking up.

“Yes, it’s over. With this, Alberto, and the curse on his sword have been dispelled.”

“Then, the monsters in the forest...”

“Because the cause is gone, soon enough, they’ll regain their sanity.”

After I explained that, Nigel sat down, exhausted.

“I, I see... I’m glad you’re safe.”

“From the beginning, I knew you’d win.”

Somehow, I still found the ability to laugh.

*“Muu, Nigel, you did your best. Ralph will praise you.”*

Ralph approached Nigel and licked his face with his tongue.

I also patted Nigel’s head, because he had done his best.

# Chapter 45

## . The Unveiled Truth

“Oh, you’ve returned.”

We returned to the entrance of the forest and beckoned to the knights whom were there.

Of course, Douglas was also there.

As soon as he saw us, Douglas waved his hand.

The huge Behemoth layed near Douglas.

It seemed that he had managed to resolve the matter safely—I exhaled in relief.

“Yes. You didn’t waste any time in slaying that monster.”

“Right? Told you, if it’s a pig like this, it’s below my level. In fact, I had high hopes... only to end up disappointed.”

Douglas had a fearless smile.

“How is it going, Adolf?”

Nigel inquired with Adolf.

Douglas was at loss for words.

“I, I didn’t think this man was a dragon. While I was still shocked by his sudden transformation, he had killed the Behemoth in an instant. Nigel, for you to have a dragon on your side...”

“Huh? I didn’t tell you that?” Nigel smiled.

—Nigel’s bad habit appeared once again.

“After the battle, you made sure to revert back to human form, right?”

I didn’t think I wanted to see Douglas in his dragon form, because it’d be a big deal.

“Because everyone was scared, I had no choice but to turn back.

Moreover, although I used to dislike it, being in a human form actually feels good.”

“That’s good.”

Other knights also seemed surprised at the fact that Douglas was a dragon.

However, it was also confusing.

Looking at their facial expressions, it seemed that reverence was stronger than fear.

It was probably because Douglas had repelled their enemy—the Behemoth.

If such was the case, Douglas would be accepted by everyone and could continue cohabitating in Lynchgiham.

“Well, more importantly...” I turned my gaze towards Alberto.

After breaking both his sword and the curse, we bound Alberto tightly with a rope and brought him there.

He had to explain the truth.

“Alberto, what on earth were you thinking? You don’t think you can just do this without suffering the consequences, right?”

Although Nigel’s tone was gentle, it was filled with anger.

However, Alberto wasn’t scared and instead spat on the ground.

“Now that this has happened, it’s all over. I’ll talk. I’ve been done in by that woman.”

“That woman?”

“Yes, Leticia. I went crazy after receiving a sword from a woman named Leticia in the Kingdom of Verclainm.”

“Le-Leticia!?”

I instinctively retreated.

Before the battle, Alberto’s sword was blood red—

—now, it looked like a mere rusted sword.

“Why is Leticia...”

“I see, is that so?”

While I was confused, Douglas nodded several times as if he had seen it coming.

“That woman, Leticia, is probably the one who cursed this guy.”

“What did you say?”

“When I went to your former kingdom, Leticia possessed the same aura as the curse. Leticia is a top-notch magician.

Perhaps she cursed the sword to wreak havoc.”

Leticia.

Prince Claude’s current fiancée, the villain who lied and pretended to be the true saint.

I thought she had a nasty personality, but I truly didn’t realize she was a witch.

“Back when you were still in your previous kingdom, she probably used something to disguise her magic—it can’t be helped that you didn’t notice.”

Douglas comforted me who felt depressed.

“Hmm, the problem has grown into that of a conflict between kingdoms. It’ll be best to hear more from Alberto.”

Nigel sighed in exhaustion.

“Hehe, what a clever prince.”

Alberto showed a nasty smile.

The reason why Alberto even bothered to talk was probably as a mean of survival.

It wouldn’t be strange for him to be executed right away.

However, as long as he still had valuable information, he wouldn’t be



killed. I thought he was a very calculative person.

Even if so.

“Hey, Alberto, don’t you dare look down on Lynchgiham.”

Adolf approached Alberto, grabbed him by his bangs, and forcefully made him lift his face.

“I’ll do whatever it takes to extract information from you. Not to mention, I have a personal grudge against you. Prepare yourself.”

“Tch.”

Alberto clicked his tongue.

Oh, how scary.

I wondered what kind of terrifying treatment he’d be receiving from now on.

It seemed that Adolf will take care of him just fine.

“But... I don’t know everything yet, but I just can’t forgive that Leticia.”

“I agree with you.”

Anger emanated from the expressions of Nigel and Douglas.

The two seemed to have agreed with each other.

However, they didn’t have to bother with that.

“Nigel, Douglas, it’s okay. This time, we’ve completely repelled Leticia’s curse. Even if we leave Leticia alone, she should be condemned.”

“What do you mean?”

Nigel’s eyes widened.

“The curse just now was stronger than ever. When such a curse is removed, it’ll return to the caster.”

I put my finger on my mouth and continued.

“There’s also a saying that in order to curse a person, you should dig

two graves—a curse will not only strike the person whom it is intended for, but also the caster.”

# Chapter 47

## The Condemnation of a Foolish Woman

Leticia was born into a family of sorcerers.

*“You’re the clan’s masterpiece—therefore, utilize that power to achieve everything.”*

Her father, who always told her so, was the first victim claimed by her curse.

The reason was—

—*simple*, because he praised her too much.

To be praised to that extent, she couldn’t help but want to see the extent of her power.

After that, she cursed and killed her entire family, leaving herself alone.

However, instead of regret, all that was born from massacring her own family was pride.

*My! It turns out I’m this majestic!*

*As my father said—I truly can achieve everything!*

Fortunately, Leticia hadn’t only been born talented, but also wealthy—and most of all, beautiful.

One day, Leticia participated in a dance party attended by aristocrats.

It was just for fun.

However, that same day, she fell in love.

It was with none other than the first prince of Lynchgiham—Nigel.

She immediately tried to approach Nigel.

However, no matter how much she flirted, Nigel never looked at her.

Even though up until that point, she had never failed to achieve

anything!

Eventually, Leticia moved on from Nigel and approached Claude, the prince of Verclaim.

Honestly, it was just an escapade.

Despite that, Verclaim was much more powerful than Lynchgiham.

*The woman you rejected is now the fiancée of the prince of the neighboring kingdom—!*

*It's too late for you to regret it—!*

— it was her way of comforting herself.

Fortunately, Claude was stupid enough to fall in love with Leticia despite having a fiancée—Eliane.

Everything after that point was a piece of cake.

Eliane was accused of being a fake saint, while she herself became the true saint.

The foolish Claude immediately took Leticia's word for it.

Truly, what a foolish man he was.

After all, she was a sorcerer who had even killed her own family—compared to that, what was a true saint?

Leticia, who got her hands on Prince Claude, was still not satisfied.

That was when she thought about getting revenge on Nigel—after all, he had rejected her.

However, he was unreachable. That was because as a prince of a kingdom, he had many escorts.

Therefore, she decided to team up with SS-class adventurer, Alberto.

She handed Alberto a number of cursed items and told him to distribute them in Lynchgiham.

The reason she borrowed the power of an SS-class adventurer was because she thought he was much easier to control than a merchant.

A professional merchant might have discovered her curses.

Although said chance was slim, as a cautious woman, she couldn't afford to take the risk.

Besides, his fighting ability was also intriguing.

In an emergency, he shall be the shield that protects her... she had that kind of belief.

Let the cursed items be distributed into Lynchgiham via Alberto.

Once said items were completely distributed, it'd be too late for Lynchgiham.

In order to break the curses, Lynchgiham might seek the help of a neighboring saint—yes, Leticia.

The rest would be easy. She'd take her sweet time seducing Nigel—such was Leticia's plan.

However, after hearing from Alberto that Eliane was in the neighboring kingdom... moreover, beside Nigel, hatred was born in her heart.

— *Ah, that's it.*

*Let's just destroy it.*

Indeed.

Her feelings were akin to someone getting tired of a once interesting toy.

She handed the cursed sword she had long since prepared to Alberto, planning to end both Eliane and Lynchgiham.

Such were the circumstances behind the recent incident.



“Claude, when I think of the possibility of the dragon's next visit, I grow fearful...”

“It's alright, Leticia! I'm here with you! I shall further strengthen the military! So, rest assured, Leticia!”

Inside Claude's room.

Leticia leaned over Claude, masking her grin.

*A foolish man, indeed... as long as I keep acting as a terrified woman, I can draw as much money as I want... his looseness with money is crazy—but, as long as I can maintain this extravagance...*

By that time, Alberto, who bore the cursed sword, should have already slain both Nigel and Eliane.

If Alberto, whom was inherently strong, were to lose the concepts of 'pain' and 'fear', he'd surely be unstoppable, *undefeatable*.

...When Leticia was thinking such.

“— Aaaaaah!!!”

“What's wrong, Leticia!?”

Suddenly, a sharp pain struck her face.

After a moment, unbearable heat also swarmed her face.

Leticia screamed while holding her face, falling to the ground.

*W-what's happening!?!?*

Leticia rolled around in agony for a while...

“Aah, aah, inside my body...!”

The pain had subsided to a point it became bearable—Leticia slowly lifted her face.

“L, Leticia, your face...”

“...My fFace?”

For some reason, Claude was pointing at Leticia while shaking.

*What?*

Why would Claude be trembling like that?

Amidst the tension, Leticia suddenly turned her gaze to the mirror in the room.

That was when the tension rose.

“W-what?? How could this be!? My face—!!”

Leticia approached in the mirror.

Her face was charred, as if she had been burnt.

Her once beautiful face had disappeared completely, having turned into an ugly, monster-like, face.

“Why!? How!? N, no way...!”

She could only come into one conclusion—

—unfortunately, that conclusion was indeed the truth.

That was right.

Her curse had been thwarted.

If a powerful curse were to be lifted before it could fulfil its objective, it'd return to the caster.

The hammer of justice had fallen upon the foolish fake saint who tried to not only harm Lynchgiham, but also slay Nigel and Eliane!

“Claude, Claude!”

“A, are you really Leticia!? F, for now, let's call a healer...”

Claude was still oblivious about everything.

Even if a curser, instead of a healer, were to be called, the curse which had found its way back to Leticia wouldn't be lifted. The only one who would be able to do so, was probably Eliane.

Leticia herself never expected that turn—for her own power to reward her with demise instead of *everything*.

*Ton, ton.*

When Claude was in a fluster, the door was knocked.

“Claude! Something has happened!”

“Who!? I don't have time to listen to your useless report right now!”

A knight entered from the hall.

Even though the room was in disarray, the knight paid no heed to that.

It was as if he was preoccupied by something else.

“F, following the dragon...”

“What!? Another dragon!? Another dragon has come!?”

“No, it’s not a dragon! This time, it’s...”

However, at that point in time, Claude had already forgotten about it

—

—about the dragon’s warning.



# Chapter 47

## Dancing Together

After that turmoil.

At Lynchgiham, which had regained its peace, a big party was to be held that night.

Nigel's birthday party was held as scheduled.

Influential aristocrats gathered from all over the kingdom while important guests from other kingdoms visited the royal castle.

I was also able to participate due to Nigel's kindness...

"Fuu..."

Exiting the venue, I exhaled.

"I'm really exhausted... who would've thought that it'd be such a grand party."

Crowds were everywhere.

Moreover, each person there was an important figure who would shoulder the future of the kingdom. As such, they were welcomed with open arms.

"It's been a long time since I last attended a party... in my former kingdom, I wasn't allowed to participate in recent parties..."

By the way, what was happening in the Kingdom of Verclaim?

...The dragon—or, Douglas, had left his nest. It was only natural that one or two archdemons would invade.

The curse should have bounced back to Leticia, as well.

...Well, that didn't matter.

"There you are, Eliane."

While I was taking a stroll around the venue, I was suddenly called out.

“Nigel, is it okay for you to be in such a place?”

“I sneaked out to look for you.”

“It wouldn’t be exciting if the protagonist of the party were to vanish.”

“I don’t mind. As of now, I want to talk to you.”

That day, Nigel was wearing white formal attire—he looked even cooler than usual.

Rather, it was as if he had a dazzling, brilliant, halo—!!!

“That’s right. Eliane, thank you for the cookies. Back then, I couldn’t thank you properly, hence why I will express my gratitude again.”

Before the party had begun, I gave Nigel my simple birthday present.

However, as soon as I handed it over, other people also started coming. As such, we weren’t able to exchange any words.

Well, it couldn’t be helped. He was the prince of that kingdom.

Actually, I wanted to hear his full impression regarding the cookies, but our difference in status was too great.

As I looked at Nigel’s profile before the party had started, I suddenly felt lonely—it was as if he had gone far away.

“You’re welcome.”

“I haven’t eaten all the cookies, yet, but they are delicious. I will treat them with care.”

“...There’s no need to make such a big deal about it. I think for you to take a bite whenever you want is already good enough.”

“What are you saying—oh, right, I have a present for you, too.”

“For me?”

When I asked, Nigel nodded.

I wondered what the present was.

Today was Nigel’s birthday. There should be no reason for him to give me a single present...

“Here.”

As I was pondering, Nigel took out a small box from his inner pocket. When he opened the lid of the box, there was a beautiful ring inside.

“That’s...?”

“Didn’t we visit a jewelry store before? It may have been the other day, but I brought it from that store.”

Ah, that expensive jewelry store...

...But I still hadn’t understood the implication.

...For me?

To receive such an expensive gift would be difficult—in the first place, what was he trying to achieve?

While my head was swirling with doubt, Nigel knelt and lowered his head on spot.

“Eliane, I want you to be my life companion.”

“Huh?”

I was taken aback.

“Is it too difficult to understand? I want you to marry me.”

“Ma...rry?”

“Indeed. I’ve been planning this for a long time.”

Nigel kept his head bowed.

“Now that I think about it, I may have been enchanted by you from the very first glance. The previous case with Alberto only further emphasized these feelings...”

“You mean, that battle...?”

“Yes, it was when Eliane gave me the blessing of the goddess. I felt like I was deeply connected with you. It felt like you were gently embracing me. It was the first time I felt so secure even though I was in the middle of a battle.”

I could no longer hear the surrounding—I could only hear Nigel's words.

He continued.

“I’ve never fallen in love before. The moment I met you, that was the first time I ever felt love. That’s why, Eliane, please be my lifelong companion and thread with me.”

At first, I thought Nigel was joking.

However, his expression was dead serious.

Besides, a marriage proposal shouldn’t be treated as a joke.

“But... our difference in status...”

“Of course, we wouldn’t be able to get married right away. I will need to persuade those around me, but no matter how long it takes, I shall do just that. What do you think, Eliane? Can you please receive this ring?”

He meant for me to be his fiancée... his future wife, right...?

W, w, what was I supposed to do—!?

I hadn’t sorted my emotions, yet!

Would I be a suitable fiancée for Nigel? Eventually, I would have to shoulder the future of the kingdom alongside Nigel, right!? That was too different from my engagement with Prince Claude.

When he proposed to me, I realized it—

—I also loved Nigel.

But I wasn’t confident enough to accept his love, nor did I feel that my love was good enough for him.

...What if during our engagement, I ended up being hated, leading to an annulment...?

“Nigel, excuse me, but...—”

—I tried to turn him down.

But soon enough, the words Douglas had said a while ago came to my

mind.

—what was wrong with confessing to someone I love? Why would I be hated if I did so?

Banishment, annulment—

—I may had been too timid.

I would accept Nigel.

At the same time, I would also confess to him.

I immediately shook my head and rephrased—

“—Nigel, please raise your head.”

Hearing me, Nigel slowly lifted his face.

“...Honestly, I’m not confident that I will be a suitable fiancée for you—but, it seems that my love for you... is certain.”

“Then...”

“...Yes. I will be happy to accept your proposal.”

Nigel’s face brightened immediately.

“Eliane, give me your hand.”

I extended my hand.

He slipped an engagement ring onto my ring finger.

Nigel would become my sword, and I his shield.

The moment I wore the ring, I became resolute.

“Well then, Eliane, would you like to dance with me?”

“Oh my, with Your Highness, not to mention, in a place like this?”

“There are a lot of people back in the venue. I just want to dance with you—the two of us, alone.”

Nigel took my hand and started dancing.

His dance was both gentle and precise. His natural movements placed

me at ease.

Under the moonlight, we danced, only the two of us.

# Chapter 48

## It's Been a Month since Then

A month had passed since the turmoil happened.

Meanwhile, Lynchgiham was busy dealing with Alberto's case.

Alberto was directly cross-examined by the knight leader, Mr. Adolf. It seemed that he was trying to extract more information... the situation didn't seem to be very good.

"The bastard didn't even say a word. As expected of an SS-class adventurer."

When I talked to Mr. Adolf, his face distorted with regret.

"Does that mean there's no progress?"

"No, but if I work at drawing the information little by little, it seems like it will work... that's why, I can't act hastily. It'll be troublesome if he were to die by mistake."

Hmm... I wondered if Alberto wasn't being straightforward.

He was tempted by the fake saint Leticia and distributed cursed items in Lynchgiham.

However, it seemed that something had spoiled Leticia's mood, which caused her to discard him.

The result was last month's violence.

That was all he knew, but there was no conclusive evidence to back up his testimony.

It seemed that Lynchgiham wanted to issue an immediate protest, but it was an international state affair.

They couldn't move as they pleased.

"Adolf is also having a hard time."

"Well, if you give me a little more time, surely, I can get something

out. Until then, we can only be patient. I'm sure Eliane is full of anticipation, but please wait a little longer."

"Ara~ I don't have any problem with that."

I smiled bitterly.

In fact, by repelling the strong curse which had been applied to Alberto, the curse should've bounced back to Leticia by now.

Unfortunately, I didn't know what kind of fate has befallen her, but surely, it couldn't be good.

That alone was enough.

Hence why, I left the matter with Alberto to the knights.

On the other hand, for the past month, I had been playing with both Ralph and Cecily.

I hadn't forgotten about Douglas.

Douglas was the dragon whom I used to telepathically converse with back in my former kingdom. For some reason, he was now happily living with us in Lynchgiham.

An evil person—I meant, dragon, he might not be, but he often teased me.

Well, of course, I wasn't actually troubled.

I actually enjoyed it.

Since my oppression within my former kingdom, my days had become filled with fun—the biggest change was;

"Eliane's cookies are really delicious."

Nigel talked to me while eating cookies.

"I'm glad that you're happy to eat them."

"What are you saying? Of course, I'd be happy being able to eat such delicious food every day. Isn't it time consuming to make these cookies?"

"No, it's no big deal, because I love baking sweets."



“Is that so? Now that I heard that, I feel better.”

Nigel then took a bite of a star-shaped cookie.

It was a cookie with strawberry jam kneaded into it. I was really confident about that one.

Would Nigel realize the difference...?

“Delicious!”

He was screaming.

“...”

“Eliane, what’s wrong? It looks like you’re thinking about something...”

“...! Nothing!”

“...Well, as long as it’s nothing.”

Nigel gave me a dubious look.

—he was the first prince of the kingdom. In the future, he’d represent the kingdom.

At the same time, he was also my fiancé.

Ah! To say it myself like that was kind of embarrassing!

That was right.

I was the fiancée of the prince of that kingdom! I had to emphasize that.

Back in my former kingdom, I was engaged to Prince Claude due to being a saint.

However, he threw tantrum at every little thing, not to mention, his arrogance reached that of the high heaven. Nigel was the exact opposite of him.

Nigel was always kind—his personality was just right for a prince.

Moreover, he was very beautiful.

I was engaged with him—even when saying it myself like that, I still

couldn't believe it.

"Excuse me..."

While pondering about that, a person entered from the hallway and knocked on the door.

It was Abby, the maid.

"Abby, what's wrong?"

When asked by Nigel, Abby's face remained unfazed.

"Actually, I received a report from the gatekeeper... it seems that they've picked up a boy who has collapsed."

"He collapsed?"

"It's an incident that shouldn't be reported to Your Highness, but the boy is proclaiming to be a 'king'. Moreover, he's looking for a healer..."

I turned at Abby's words.

"Could he be..."

"He can't be Prince Claude, right, Abby?"

"Prince Claude... certainly, he's the prince of that other kingdom? No, certainly not. If he were indeed Prince Claude, we'd be in an uproar."

"I see."

The word 'king' alerted me, but I didn't feel any unpleasant premonitions.

Not to mention, Claude wasn't so young that he'd be referred to as a 'boy'. Also, it was impossible for him to collapse.

He was a man who'd secure his own safety even if the citizens of his kingdom were to starve to death.

I didn't know what was going on in my kingdom right now, but considering his personality, it was unbelievable for him to come here alone.

There was no doubt he'd have prepared an unnecessarily large troop.

“Alright, for the time being, we shall listen to his story.”

“Please give me a moment.”

Abby bowed her head.

“Nigel, can I go too?”

“Eliane?”

“Yes. I’m curious.”

From Abby’s story, I concluded that he wasn’t in good shape.

My healing magic might be useful.

“I understand. Let’s go, Eliane.”

“Thank you.”

We decided to head to the main gate of Lynchgiham.

# Chapter 49

## A Mysterious Boy

Upon arriving at the guard station near the main gate, the usual gatekeeper was sitting in a chair.

Laying on the bed next to him was a black-haired boy.

“Oh, if it isn’t Nigel and Eliane.”

The moment he noticed us, the gatekeeper turned around.

“Pardon the intrusion...”

“It’s alright. Anyway, is that the collapsed boy?”

When Nigel looked at the boy lying on the bed, the gatekeeper slowly nodded.

“Yes. Have you heard the report?”

“I have. I heard he call himself a king, and that he’s looking for a healer?”

“Indeed. However, since he neither has a pass nor can he pay the admission fee, I couldn’t easily let him into the city.

From the beginning, he seemed to be faltering, and then, amidst his explanation, he suddenly fainted. I thought leaving him be would have been heartless, hence I set him down.”

“I see, thank you. I believe that was an appropriate response.”

Hearing Nigel’s words, the gatekeeper’s cheeks became slightly flustered.

The slumbering boy was draped in a long, black, cloak. It seemed to be made of an uncommon material.

Hmm... his face was cute, but at the same time, it felt suspicious. He didn’t have any money for the admission fee.

*... This boy is just suspicious.*

But... I was a little concerned.

Could it be, that boy...

“Ah, he’s awake.”

As we stared at the boy’s face, he mumbled, “Hmm...” while slowly opening his eyes.

“Welcome to Lynchgiham. How are you feeling?” Nigel asked the boy.

Although his tone was gentle, there was also a hint of vigilance.

That wasn’t surprising—after all, the boy was suspicious.

In a situation where we didn’t know what to do, Nigel’s reaction was plausible.

The boy showed a calm attitude.

“Lynchgiham... yes, I finally reached Lynchgiham... but who are you...?”

He let out a voice.

When the boy had awoken from his slumber, he was surrounded by strangers.

However, instead of panicking, the unfazed boy stared straight into Nigel’s eyes.

“I’m Nigel, the prince of this kingdom.”

“—Prince...!”

The boy’s eyes widened.

He gripped the frame of the bed to get up.

“I beg of you...! Tell me, I heard that there’s a good healer in this kingdom—where on earth is that person!?”

But when the boy tried to stand, he almost fell over again.

“Ara, it’s dangerous to wake up in a hurry like that.”

Immediately before the boy could fall onto the floor, I supported his body.

“I, I’m sorry—and you are...?”

“I’m Eliane. More importantly, your body is full of injuries—it must be painful.”

“No, I’m fine. It seems that my regeneration spell stopped working due to losing too much magic.”

...As I thought, that boy...

Anyway, first of all, I had to heal that boy—I would hear the full story later.

“I shall fix you up soon— *Heal.*”

I gave the boy a lap pillow and used healing magic.

I still didn’t know the boy’s aim.

But... there was a saying passed down in Lynchgiham—

—that we should help those who were in need.

That boy might not have been a citizen of Lynchgiham, but I still couldn’t ignore him whom was injured.

“This light is...? It feels comfortable...”

The boy was basked in the holy light.

By the way, let’s also restore his magical power.

Even so, that was the extent of my help. The boy’s clothes would remain in tatters while his appearance caked in dirt.

He probably needed a bath.

However... for some reason, the boy smelled like a flower.

“It’s finished—how do you feel?”

“My magical power...! I thought it’d take a while before my magical power would be completely replenished...?”

The boy seemed to be confused, and also beyond surprised.

“Such an excellent healer... no, could it be—!”

*Guu~*

When the boy tried to speak, such a silly sound echoed in the room.

“Are you hungry?”

“P, perhaps... I’ve only been drinking water for the last three days, but the water here isn’t good. I couldn’t drink much...”

When I asked the boy, he answered shyly.

Because I had used healing magic, although the boy’s attire was in tatters, he looked refreshed—as if he had just taken a bath. His fatigue should have disappeared.

However, healing magic wasn’t all-purpose.

No matter how advanced it was, it wouldn’t be able to get rid of hunger.

Well, even if I didn’t eat, I could probably last for about a month... but the hunger wouldn’t subside.

“But that’s not important right, now. I have something pressing to do.”

“You can’t do anything on an empty stomach—are you familiar with that saying?”

It was a word often used in the kingdom.

I put my index finger on the boy’s mouth just as he was about to speak.

“First of all, food enriches your life. It’s said that you can only have a meaningful discussion only after you are sated—

right, Nigel?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

When I gazed at Nigel, he nodded.

“That’s right. Now that you’ve come all the way here, I shall invite you.”

“To where?”

When the boy rounded his eyes, Nigel answered.

“To the royal castle.”



# Chapter 50

## Omurice

In the kitchen.

“By the way, young lady, sorry for only asking now, but is it okay for you to cook?”

That was how the chef usually referred to me.

“It’s alright. I will say it again—I love cooking. It makes me happy.”

“Really? The young lady has a wonderful personality. It isn’t uncommon for aristocrats to think that cooking is a menial task and should be done by someone of my station. Well, save for Lord Nigel.”

I wasn’t an aristocrat. Tthough, iIt would be strange to deny that.

—Since then, we returned to the royal castle with the boy.

To serve him food.

At first, Nigel ordered the chef to do it, but I disapproved of that.

Because... because it was a big deal! As such, I should be the one who cook!

The chefs were worried about me, but I still insisted on doing it.

“I will start cooking.”

I wore an apron, rolled up my sleeves, and stood in the battlefield called the kitchen.

“What are you planning to make, young lady?”

“I’m going to make an omelet rice.”

“Omelet rice? Would he be alright with that?”

The chef frowned with doubt. He probably thought it was ill-suited for serving to guests.

Although I already had a rough idea, the identity of the boy was still

unknown.

However, there was no doubt this was a great opportunity for introducing him to Lynchgiham's cuisine.

*"But omelet rice is a commoner's dish... what are you thinking? This is why the young lady is so naïve..."*

I feared that kind of response—

—hence why, I had an idea!

"What's wrong? You're staring at my face."

"Nothing."

"...I feel like you're thinking about something problematic..."

The chef narrowed his eyes.

...Alright! Let's start right away!

To make ketchup rice, I mixed ketchup with white rice.

I spread oil on the frying pan and turned on the stove.

By using a magic stone of fire, anyone could easily light the stove. Such was the mechanism of the stove.

The stone itself was quite expensive, but since it was a royal castle, a lot was in stock.

Once the frying pan had warmed up, I added the white rice.

I continued to add ketchup and stirred them.

"As always, you are quick-witted. At this rate, I will far for you. Young Lady, won't you consider being a chef?"

"Thank you, but I still have a lot of things I want to do."

"A shame."

The chef smiled.

While enjoying the conversation and cooking, the ketchup rice was completed in no time.

I shall plate it at once.

“Next is the egg...!”

I took out the eggs and broke them one after another against the bowl.

Then, I poured them into a frying pan, and mixed as if I were making scrambling eggs.

Once it was brought to half-boiled, it was finally time to add the ketchup rice!

Wrap the rice with the egg—and it was finished!

“Demiglace sauce would be a nice addition, but let’s make an orthodox sauce!”

I took out the ketchup and wrote ‘Welcome <3’ on the omelet rice.

People around the world said that dishes aren’t just about taste but should also look as if they were ‘shining’.

By that standard, my omelet rice would look good enough.

Yup.

I was able to do it well.

I plated the omelet rice and brought it to the dining room.

“I’m done.

Upon entering the dining hall, I discovered that Nigel was already seated on the long desk along with his sister Cecily.

The boy was sitting face to face with her.

“I want to eat!”

Cecily swung her legs full of anticipation as she held a spoon in hand.

“Cecily doesn’t have to eat, right?”

“Big brother is so mean! Cecily also wants to eat big sister’s food!”

When I saw Cecily puffing her cheeks, I laughed unintentionally.

“It’s alright. Besides, it takes the same amount of time to prepare for

three people, anyway. Not to mention, I want a lot of people to taste it.”

In any case, the omelet rice I had prepared would be enough for three people.

“I feel bad... wait, three people?”

“Cecily, the boy, and also Nigel—don’t you want to eat?”

“No, no, I definitely want to. Eliane’s food is excellent. Thank you for cooking it.”

That was only to be expected. After all, he had been sitting at the front of the table since the beginning.

Although he was always dignified and cool, he had his cute moments.

“This is...?”

After I served everyone, it was the boy’s turn to go wide eyed.

“It’s a dish called omelet rice.”

“Omelet rice... I’ve never heard about this before.”

“I see. It’s very delicious, please take a bite.”

Nigel was astounded by the boy’s reaction.

It couldn’t be helped—because omelet rice wasn’t that unusual.

It was the kind of dish that would be served in every household. It was strange for someone to not know about it—

—and yet, the boy said it was the first he had ever heard of it.

Seeing the reaction, I grew even more convinced as to who the boy actually was.

“Then, I shall eat without hesitation.”

The boy slowly put his spoon in the egg.

Then...

“...Oh!”

The boy raised his voice.

The thick yolk overflowed from inside the egg as he popped it.

“It’s a fluffy egg omelet rice!”

I puffed my chest.

“Wow... there is no such thing in my village.”

The boy gazed mysteriously at the omelet rice.

Then, he slowly ate it.

“Delicious!”

His eyes beamed.

“Does it taste good?”

“Y, yes! It’s the first time I’ve eaten something as delicious as this! Did you really make this?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

“Wow...!”

The boy aggressively ate the omelet rice.

Seeing that he liked the food, it was worth the effort.

“Eliane, your cooking is delicious as usual.”

“Big sister’s cooking is the best!”

It seemed that Nigel and Cecily were on the same page. They both seemed to be pleased with the fluffy egg omelet rice.

Although I was confident, I was relieved that it was actually to their liking.

“Thank you for the meal.”

In no time at all, the boy had finished the omelet rice.

He wiped his mouth with a napkin.

“Are you satisfied?”

“What do you mean?”

“I still have some more omelet rice left.”

“...!”

The boy tensed immediately.

Earlier, I told the chef to prepare more omelet rice.

It was a dish that didn't require much effort in the first place. As such, making it again was nothing.

The boy seemed a little uneasy.

“S, seconds, please.”

He handed me the plate with trembling hands.

I received it with a smile.

As I thought, making omelet rice was the correct decision.

Aristocrat food may be delicious, but I thought it wouldn't sate the boy's hunger.

Anyway, I wanted him to fill his belly.

I went to the kitchen again to procure another omelet rice.

...An hour later.

“Thank you for your help. I wasn't only healed, but was also allowed to eat such a meal.”

After finishing, the boy confronted Nigel again.

By the way... Cecily had returned to her own room.

She insisted on staying, but the conversation starting from now would be important. It was too early for her to get involved.

The boy's complexion had also improved.

Apparently, he wasn't feeling well due to simply being hungry instead of injured.

“Express your gratitude to Eliane—isn't her cooking skill amazing?”

“Yes! I didn’t expect to eat such delicious food. In the other kingdoms, I had my fair share of the food I disliked. But apparently, this kingdom is completely different.”

Other kingdoms?

It was merely my intuition, but I felt like I knew what he was implying.

“By the way, you haven’t given us your name, yet—who are you?”

Nigel asked the boy.

Right. We had forgotten to ask for his name.

I was too excited to cook for him...

“I’m sorry for not giving my name. I’d also like to apologize for my uncouth behavior, and the fact that my presence is discomforting. From here on, I shall explain seriously.”

The atmosphere of the boy had changed drastically.

Although he had been speaking in a carefree manner until now, his wording changed to a polite one.

He stared straight at Nigel.

“I’m Philip—the Spirit King.”

# Chapter 51

## The Problems of the Spirit King

...Eh?

The Spirit King?

“Eh!?”

“E, Eliane? I thought you had already guessed it!?”

Nigel was surprised when I involuntarily let out a gasp.

Because... *The Spirit King!*?

Even I found it unexpected.

“I realized he’s a spirit, but ...the Spirit King?”

I was honestly baffled.

That was right.

From the moment I first saw him, I realized his magical power was different from that of a human’s.

The spirits were separated from other races. They also had their own cultural beliefs.

Because of that, we—humans—rarely saw them.

“...I didn’t think he was someone so surprising. I’m surprised by who he is—but Eliane’s reaction is more shocking.”

Nigel laughed.

“I, I’m sorry...”

“Why are you apologizing? Has Eliane ever seen a spirit?”

“Yes.”

It was during my time in my previous kingdom.



Suddenly, Prince Claude ordered me to join the knights' expedition.

I only found out later that the knights lacked healers.

Of course, there were healers in the clinics and guilds—but, if he were to task them, he'd have to pay them.

Meanwhile, as a saint, it was part of my obligation. Hence, he could make me do it for free.

Hence, that order of his.

Well, that was fine.

The handsome and gentle knight leader—Klaus, was with me.

I was honestly happy to be of help to everyone.

During that time, I encountered a spirit when I passed through the forest.

The spirit was small due to still being young—however the magical power it possessed was very similar to Philip's.

"It's no wonder for you to be surprised. After all, we, the spirits, rarely ever appear in public. Your reaction isn't unreasonable."

Philip said in an undeterred expression.

"So, how did the Spirit King end up in Lynchgiham? Moreover, in such a haggard appearance."

When Nigel asked such, Philip opened his mouth.

"Actually, our village encountered a problem."

"A problem?"

"Yes, hence why, I thought an excellent healer from the human world might be able to solve it. I was searching around in the surrounding towns and villages."

"I see."

"After a long time, I finally found the healer..."

Philip turned to me—

“—For a saint to be in this city... Please, saint, do help us.”

He knelt and bowed.

It was like a knight who had sworn allegiance to the queen.

“W, wait!”

I crouched in a hurry and matched his eye levels.

“Raise your head, and, I’m not a saint!”

“Why would you say that? That healing spell of yours could only be used by those who have been blessed by the goddess!

Why would you lie like that?”

Philip tilted his head.

Spirits were a race far more magical than humans.

Therefore, it couldn’t be helped that he noticed my true identity. Indeed, in such a situation, I didn’t think I could get away.

“Haa... it seems that I can’t conceal it. That’s right. In my former kingdom, I was referred to as such.”

“As I thought.”

“Even so, how do you know that term? It was supposed to be my hometown’s secret.”

From another perspective, the power of the saint was a great force for a kingdom.

It wasn’t impossible for the other kingdoms to try to claim the saint for themselves—especially due to misinformation.

Therefore, it was forbidden to divulge information regarding the saint.

However, Philip knew...

“Once upon a time, us spirits were taken care by a saint. I remembered that time.”

“Taken care...? How long ago was that?”

“I think it was 200 years ago.”

Far from being my predecessor—it seemed to be a really ancient saint.

Well, nowadays, saints didn't have much freedom. They were always kept close.

Hmm...? Wait.

“Philip, how old are you?”

“Me? I think I've been alive for about 300 years.”

As I thought!

I felt something odd when he said 200 years ago! If it was according to my intuition...

...The spirits were different from us humans.

According to folklore, ancient spirits may have lived for over a thousand years.

Compared to that, it might not be so surprising... but I was still shocked.

“You're a lot older than me!”

“Probably so. What's with it?”

Philip asked in confusion.

Philip's appearance was that of a boy. He looked as if he was five years younger than us.

However, when I heard that, my impression changed.

Because he was a senior in terms of age!

“Ha, hahaha! Things sure have been lively ever since Eliane ended up in Lynchgiham. Back then, it was a dragon...”

Nigel laughed bitterly.

Or rather, he was a little stiff.

“Well, now that we have learned your true identity... what is it that ails your village?”

After I asked, Philip steadily begun to talk.

## Chapter 52

Even if it's a Spirit, Those who are in Need Cannot be Overlooked

"As you may know, us spirits have lived apart from other races since ancient times."

That was common knowledge.

"Recently, I've been living in a village in a forest for three thousand years. Of course, we have been preventing humans from entering with a barrier."

"Is it a forest nearby?"

"Yes. With a carriage, it won't take more than three days to reach. Just in case, don't tell anyone about this."

Philip raised an index finger to in front of his mouth.

Even so... 3000 years?

For them to casually refer to such by saying, 'recently', the life of a spirit sure was long...

Philip resumed.

"We've lived in peace until now, but... it started about half a year ago. Something has begun to happen in the forest where the village is located."

"Is it some kind of abnormality?"

"Yes, suddenly, the forest began to be enshrouded with miasma."

Philip's expression darkened in pain.

"From your perspective, that miasma must be threatening."

"That's right. Us spirits are a race that value air and water above all else. A plague has set because of this miasma.

Furthermore, not only have we spirits contracted some illnesses, powerful monsters have begun to appear in the forest."

"I see. I'm sorry for the inconvenience. Just in case, I will ask you—have you tried everything to get rid of the miasma?"

Philip nodded.

“Despite so, our power alone isn’t enough to eliminate the miasma. Sso we decided to ask humans for help.”

“But why humans?”

“Because the saint... because you’re there...”

Philip gazed at me.

“Something similar happened 200 years ago, and with the help of the saint, we were able to remove the miasma. I also heard that 200 years ago, the relationship between the saint and the spirits was relatively good. Compared to that time...

the situation has changed a lot, now...”

...How free the saint 200 years ago was!

Perhaps, 200 years ago, such was the norm.

My situation might be the odd one out.

I was a little jealous of the saint from 200 years ago.

“I never thought it’d result in me leaving the village. Since the saint has lived in the kingdom for 200 years, I thought she’d be there and went to said kingdom, however...”

“Wait a minute, when did you go to that kingdom?”

“Two to three months ago, I think.”

Two to three months...

...if such a troubled spirit king were to arrive, shouldn’t he have been aided immediately?

Why didn’t I hear of such a report?

“Although I can roughly guess what has happened, could you share with me what you experienced?”

“I was told to pay in advance, he also added, *‘A child like you? A Spirit King? Even an idiot could come up with a better lie! Not to mention, the saint is busy! As if she’d grant a child like you an audience!’*”

“...Did you ask for that person’s name?”

“I think his name is Claude.”

Bingo!

The only person who’d dare say that was Prince Claude!

Most of the time, people like us—even the gatekeeper would lend an ear to his story!

Even though the Spirit King was in such a state, he still yelled at him. He must have treated him as some kind of stress-reliever.

“Failing to meet the saint, I was in despair...”

“I wouldn’t say such a thing! I didn’t even know you were there! Believe me!”

“At that time, I truly believed the saint had changed. But today, after our first meeting, I’ve changed my mind. You’re as beautiful and kind as the saint from 200 years ago.”

Although there were many differences separating me from that saint of 200 years ago—but I didn’t need to tell him that.

“However, you couldn’t return home as it was. You heard about a good healer arriving in Lynchgiam from somewhere?”

From behind, Nigel asked.

Philip agreed.

Afterwards, he had been searching for a good healer for months... no wonder he became tattered.

“That’s right, I didn’t expect much, but who would’ve thought that I’d encounter the saint... Please, saint, and also Your Highness the prince of this kingdom, won’t you help us? That’s right, of course I’ll return the favor.”

Philip bowed again.

I understood his story.

Originally, him being scrutinized was already an issue. After all, he was the Spirit King—it could lead to a problem between the two

kingdoms.

However, there was a more pressing issue.

Even if that escalated, it wouldn't solve the suffering of the other spirits whom were troubled by the miasma.

"Nigel."

"I understand."

I made eye contact with Nigel—apparently, we had the same idea.

Then, I didn't have to worry.

"I understand. I shall lend you the power of the saint."

When I said that, Philip raised his face. "Really!?"

"T, thank you! I was prepared to give you some time to mull over this matter... but I'm glad that you decided so quickly.

With this, the spirits will soon receive help..."

He squeezed my hand tightly.

"—!"

Before, I didn't feel anything because I thought he was a child, but now that I realized he was older than me, the situation was different...

Although his face was hidden beneath long bangs, Philip was quite beautiful.

No matter how much he looked like a child, if such a handsome guy was in my vicinity, I couldn't help but get flustered.

"You don't have to worry about anything. In this kingdom there exists a saying that people in need should be helped. I can't abandon you."

That said, I averted my gaze from him.

If he were to stare at me like that, I'd feel shy.

"There's also a saying that the sooner the better. Shall we set out immediately?"

"Y, yes!"

“Well, then...”

I cleared my throat and declared.

“You don’t have to be so formal with us. You are the Spirit King, therefore there’s no need to humble yourself.”

“What are you saying? To the saint, who is our soon-to-be benefactor, it’s only natural to show this kind of reverence...”

“There’s no such thing as a saint! Please refer to me as Eliane!”

I was still not used to being treated so carefully.

Initially, Philip was anxious, but, eventually...

“I understand... then, Sain—I mean, Eliane, thank you.”

“Yes, I understand.”

I smiled. I loved that kind of tone because it felt more genuine.

“Eliane, I will follow you. I can’t let you go alone.”

“Of course, thank you.”

Nigel was suitable for the blessing of the goddess.

If he and I were together, even if we encountered a monster on the way, we should be able to survive without any problems.

“Then, again, Philip, thank you for your cooperation.’

“Yes, the same goes with you.”

Philip stared straight into my eyes and thanked me.



# Chapter 53

## The Reliable Dragon and Divine Creature

After parting with Nigel and the others, I went to the courtyard.

“Douglas, Ralph-chan, are you guys here?”

In the courtyard, Douglas was playing with Ralph with a piece of the golden tree— *katsuobushi*.

I wanted to call them out immediately, but they looked like they were having fun, so I let them be for a while.

“It’s about time. My game is more than just a game. So, you better prepare yourself.”

*“Huh, Ralph also think the same. Today shall be the day where we find out which one of us is the strongest—the beast, or the dragon.”*

Sparks scattered between the two.

“Ey!”

*Poi.*

Douglas threw the *katsuobushi* up into the sky.

I thought it had reached the top of the royal castle.

It was apparent that Douglas was serious.

Eventually, the *katsuobushi* slowly tipped over and fell—before being swept away by the wind towards a corner of the courtyard—

—precisely at that moment.

*“Wan—!”*

Ralph barked like a dog.

*Zuzazazaza!*

Ralph rushed towards the falling *katsuobushi*.

As the katsuobushi fell towards the second floor of the royal castle, Ralph kicked off the ground and leaped high.

*Suta—!*

Ralph caught the katsuobushi and landed on the ground.

*“Kukuku...! What do you think!? This is the power of Ralph! Have you finally decided to acknowledge it!?”*

“Hmm... for a divine beast like you, that’s only to be expected. I shall throw it even higher this time. How long will you be able to keep up?”

*“How silly.”*

...It looked fun.

Was I in the way?

I felt guilty for letting Nigel wait.

“Douglas! Ralph-chan!”

I raised my voice and waved towards Douglas and Ralph.

“Why, if it isn’t Eliane?”

*“The katsuobushi-bearer of a saint!”*

Ralph happily rushed over as soon as he saw me.

Douglas, on the other hand, folded his arms and didn’t move an inch.

“Ralph-chan, you’re as fluffy as always.”

*“This fur is a divine beast’s pride. I always take care of it!”*

When I stroked his chin, Ralph closed his eyes in pleasure.

While doing so, I turned my gaze towards Douglas.

“Douglas. Nigel and I will depart from Lynchgiham for a while. It’ll be for about a week.”

“What happened, so suddenly?”

“Actually...”

I explained the situation to Ralph and Douglas.

“I see... the Spirit King. Another ridiculous figure has appeared.”

“I’m also surprised.”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“It seems that it will take about three days by carriage to reach the forest where the spirits dwell. Meanwhile, I’d like to ask Douglas and Ralph to stay home.”

The barrier surrounding the kingdom would become less effective as I move away.

That distance should be alright.

I didn’t think it’d be broken—unless something extreme were to happen. But, *just in case*.

Even if something were to happen, the dragon, Douglas, and the divine beast, Ralph, would be there to solve the problem.

“Got it. By the way, shouldn’t we escort you to the spirit forest? That will save time, unless you have another idea?”

“Don’t worry about that. More than anything, I want you to protect this kingdom.”

I refused politely.

There was also another reason... most importantly, to be held by Douglas again—that is just bad for a maiden’s heart!

Although that could help me travel faster.

However, there was that side effect—my heart pounding like crazy.

“There are three people, meanwhile Ralph-chan can only carry two people at once. That’s why, Ralph-chan also has to stay behind.”

“*Kun.*”

Ralph let out a sad cry.

“I see. Haha! It’s fine, leave everything to me. I shall gracefully fulfil my role while you are away!”

*“Ralph will also do his best.”*

“I’m looking forward to it.”

Douglas’ fighting ability was considerable. In fact, he had slayed the Behemoth in an instant.

However, he may be lacking a little bit of common sense.

Douglas always said that I was a handful of a woman—even though that was supposed to be my line.

“As long as you’re with Nigel, even if something were to happen along the way, you’ll be alright. But still, I’m worried.

What if you fall onto the side of the road?”

“You’re being overprotective!”

“What are you talking about? You have a beautiful skin. It’ll be a problem if it were to be grazed, or peeled. You haven’t had your marriage, yet. ...That’s right.”

With a flash, Douglas manifested something akin to a ball.

He had just activated storage magic.

I heard it was a lost spell. But he used it like nobody’s business... as expected of a dragon.

“You should bring this.”

“What’s this?”

I received the ball from Douglas.

It was a mysterious, purple, glass ball.

The size of the purple ball allowed it to be put inside a pocket without any problems.

“It’s a ‘Dragon Jewel’. If something happens, pour your magical power into it. That way, I can appear before you in an instant.”

“Huh?! Are you for real!?”

He was carrying around some amazing things...

“Of course, but the moment you use it, it’ll break. Since it can only be used once, you must think carefully before using it.”

“Thank you! I’m grateful.”

I was honestly happy for his concern.

Douglas had a mischievous side, but he was akin to a dependable big brother.

“Well then, Fenrir, let’s stop playing and get ready to be watchmen.”

*“Got it—but, ‘watchmen’? What am I supposed to do?”*

“Who knows?”

Douglas and Ralph stared at each other before tilting their heads...

...Scratch that, *‘dependable big brother’* who?

When I saw Douglas and Ralph acting in such a way, I got worried.

# Chapter 54

## The Cause of the Miasma

It took about three days of swaying inside a carriage before we finally reached the forest that Philip spoke of.

“It’s here.”

I alighted from the carriage and glanced at the forest from the top of a small hill.

“...Wow, it’s certainly full of miasma. Good job putting up with it until today.”

Just looking at it from here, I could see the swirling black miasma.

Thick miasma polluted the air and water, and in some cases, made them poisonous.

Spirits were more sensitive to the air and water than humans.

Even so, to live in such a place... their suffering was apparent.

“Do you have any plans for abandoning this forest and moving to another place?”

Nigel asked.

Did Philip perhaps anticipate that question?

“Of course, I’ve thought about that. In fact, this isn’t the first this has happened. But, finding a place that won’t be discovered by humans is difficult. On top of that, we also have to create barriers and build houses... Moving isn’t an easy feat, and there’s a risk that spirits might die while moving.”

...It wasn’t the same as a family deciding to move.

I didn’t know how many spirits were there, but there was no doubt the number was large.

They couldn’t easily let go of their home.

“If possible, I don’t want to forsake this place. However, should I have failed to find the saint, I was prepared to accept the risks and move. I’m really glad I found Eliane.”

“I’m also glad I met you before that could happen.”

More importantly, if I didn’t come to the forest and investigate the miasma, I wouldn’t be able to pinpoint the cause.

We boarded the carriage again and went closer to the forest.

“Let’s proceed as we are. Rest assured, I shall envelop this carriage in a barrier. You won’t be corrupted by the miasma as long as you remain by my side.”

Towards what I said, they nodded with serious faces.

The carriage finally entered the forest.

“Even so, it sure is getting hotter.”

Inside the carriage.

Nigel shook the collar of his jacket.

There were four seasons in that area.

Nigel’s remark was no surprise—we were entering the ‘summer’ area.

Us being inside a carriage helped, but the strong sunlight deprived me of my physical strength.

“That’s right. Once we return to Lynchgiham, I shall prepare cold food.”

“Ooh, that sounds nice. I’m looking forward to it.”

I couldn’t help but hear the excitement in Nigel’s voice.

Philip raised his right knee and closed his eyes. He didn’t seem to be the talkative type.

“The miasma is gradually thickening as we delve deeper into the forest—Philip, are we heading in the right direction?”

When I asked, Philip opened his eyes.

“As expected of the saint. As of now, we’re heading towards the lake behind the forest.”

“Is something there?”

“Probably.”

Philip nodded and continued.

“I think the lake there is the source of the miasma. I’ve tried to purify the lake many times, but our magic was simply lacking... but, if it’s the saint...”

“I see.”

We wouldn’t know unless we check it.

After proceeding for a while, we eventually arrived in front of a certain lake.

“It’s a pretty big lake, isn’t it?”

“But the water is very muddy.”

“So it seems.”

Beside Nigel, I examined the lake—

—It was a big lake.

However, the water was a turbid gray, and there were bubbles in some places.

As the bubbles popped, miasma was released—the air was polluted.

“Philip’s guess seems to be on mark.”

I didn’t know the cause, but the lake was indeed producing miasma.

The miasma had dyed the entire forest, tormenting Philip and the others.

“As I thought...”

Philip’s expression distorted.

“Even while we stand here, it’s generating more and more miasma.”



“Hmm. It’s even worse than when I left the forest. While I was absent, my people were suffering... everything is my fault.”

“You didn’t do anything wrong. Philip is doing his best.”

Towards Philip, who bit his lips, I said so.

Although he may be a kind-hearted spirit, he was being too hard on himself.

As the Spirit King, that may be a good trait, but if he were to continue shouldering everything by himself, someday, it’d lead to his own ruin.

I was really lucky to meet Philip before that could happen.

“Eliane, what do you think?”

Philip was on his last straw—he gazed at me with anxiety.

“Yes, it may be a foul miasma, but I think I can purify it just fine.”

“R-really!?”

The light of hope shone in Philip’s eyes.

“I’m going to start. However, I don’t know how long it will take if I were to cast the purification spell from here...”

It might be necessary for me to pray all day long.

It mustn’t—the other spirits were suffering.

I had no choice.

“Excuse me for a moment.”

“Eliane? What are you going to do?”

Nigel widened his eyes.

I took off my shoes and lifted the hem of my skirt.

Perhaps because I rarely exposed my skin in front of men, I felt like I had just done something I wasn’t supposed to.

I dipped my foot into the lake.

When I was immersed in the lake, the gray, muddy, lake began to

shine an emerald green.

# Chapter 55

## I cut off the Miasma from its Source

“It’s the divine light...!”

From behind me, Philip uttered.

The light became more intense, and the greyness of the lake gradually cleared up.

“As I thought, this method is the fastest.”

At the same time, I used purification magic throughout the entire forest.

The forest which had been corrupted by miasma was rapidly purified.

The leaves that had withered and turned dark brown became fresh green. The soil, which had been soaked in miasma, returned to its former state. The pale, purplish, air was regenerated into a transparent one.

I spent about less than thirty minutes inside the lake.

After the emerald green light had disappeared, the lake took on a mysterious blue color.

“It’s complete.”

From beside the carriage, I wiped my feet with a towel.

“—is it finished!?”

Nigel was surprised and rushed to me at once.

“Eliane, what’s wrong? You seem to have consumed a lot of your magical power...”

“Indeed. But it isn’t a big deal. On the contrary, I’m glad to have broken a sweat after dipping my feet into the cold lake.”

I said to the concerned Nigel.

“As expected of the saint...! Not only did You purify the forest, you

also accomplished it in a terrifying speed!”

“Is this result alright with you?”

“Oh...! Of course! The forest has been restored. In fact, the air and water are a lot cleaner than before!”

Purification magic can be activated without touching the target.

However, it was certain that the effect would be stronger if the target was touched.

Because that time around, the intended target was the water, I was able to permeate it without using too much magic.

In other words, the magical power oozed from me, and I was able to counteract the lake’s miasma.

...Although back then, when I tried to use that method, Prince Claude scoffed at me. “*The water is turning into a nasty soup stock!*” Which made me reluctant to do it.

Anyway, I was glad everything had been resolved.

“I don’t believe there will be any more miasma coming from this lake in the future. I’ve cut it off from its source.”

“Oh... Eliane, I don’t know how to thank you enough... thank you very much...”

“You’re welcome.”

However, why did the lake start generating miasma?

I didn’t think it was something that would happen just like that?

I tried to locate the cause, but I couldn’t.

It may have been caused by artificial means, but I couldn’t suspect anything yet.

In any case, I had cut off the source of the miasma, and the forest was restored.

One case was settled.

“You seem to be far more powerful than the saint I encountered 200

years ago. Even the saint from 200 hundred years ago would've taken an entire day to get rid this level of miasma."

"Really?"

I didn't know about the saint from 200 years ago, so there wasn't much for me to say, honestly.

But I was happy to be praised.

"Well... let's return to Lynchgiham."

Thus, I entered the carriage...

... *Furafura*~

Suddenly, two small lights appeared before us.

They were akin to fireflies.

*"Saint, saint...!"*

*"The forest has become more beautiful...!"*

As I heard such voices, the two lights spun around my head.

"Al, Mars, why did you step out of the barrier? I told you to not carelessly leave the village."

*"I came out because the forest is so beautiful."*

*"Since the saint is here, it can't be helped."*

From the lights, giggles and laughter could be heard.

"Philip, Eliane, what are those?"

"They are spirits."

When I pointed my index finger, the two lights—the spirits, perched there.

"Are they young spirits? They're very cute."

*"Thank you."*

*"Mrs. Saint is also cute."*

*Ara, what good children they are!*

It was rare for a spirit to take a humanoid form like Philip. Young spirits... just like Al and Mars, were often seen in the appearance of small lights.

If they grew up into someone like Philip, then they wouldn't carelessly appear in public. Hence, humanoid spirits were rarely seen.

Seeing us, Philip sighed.

"Well, thankfully, I'm with the saint. But what if it were a bad person? We'll have this talk later."

*"I don't wanna!"*

*"Heeelp!"*

"...Pay attention to your king..."

I jokingly said that to the quivering spirits.

"Even so, it is rare to perceive a young spirit. A young spirit can't judge whether or not someone is morally good.

Therefore, they only become fond of those with pure-hearts. You're indeed eligible to be a saint."

Philip seemed to be both surprised and confused.

Eventually, one spirit flew away from my finger and perched on top of Nigel's head.

*"This one's also a good person. He smells good."*

"Are you referring to me?"

*"Who else, silly~"*

Nigel turned his gaze upwards.

Apparently, Nigel was also pure-hearted. Well, of course, that was only natural. No wonder the young spirits immediately grew fond of him.

"It looks like they are fond of us. Like this, we can't return to Lynchgiham right away."

Nigel shrugged.

Hearing that,

“If you don’t mind, why don’t the two of you come to our village?”

“Philip, by that, you mean the spirit village? I heard that humans aren’t invited, is that really okay?”

“Of course, I’ve been wanting to invite you all this time. If you have something urgent to do, I won’t take too much of your time. What do you think?”

When I turned to Nigel, I saw him nodding. “As long as we aren’t considered a hindrance.”

“Then, I will gladly accept your invitation. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

We were then invited to the spirit village.

# Chapter 56

## The Village of Spirits

“This is the entrance to the village.”

We followed Philip, who stopped in front of something that looked like a plain meadow.

“There’s nothing there, though?”

Nigel bent his neck.

However.

“...The space around here is separated from the real world.”

When I said that, Philip was surprised.

“As expected of the saint! Can you feel it?” He asked me.

“Yes. However, unless one is very attentive, they cannot feel it. They also would not notice it unless you acknowledged it first.”

“Because humans should never approach the spirit village. There are many layers of tight barriers.”

“I see. Is it really alright to invite us there?”

“It’s different—you guys are our benefactors.”

With that said, Philip held his hand over the grass.

Then...

“A, a village entrance!?”

Nigel raised his voice.

The space in front of me began to distort—after a while, a wooden gate appeared.

Philip turned around and told us:

“Welcome to the spirit village.”



Following Philip as he walked, we passed the gate.

“It’s a beautiful place.”

“It’s all thanks to Eliane for clearing the miasma. Until a while ago, the plants were dead and miserable.”

I looked around as I walked.

The young spirits I mentioned earlier were floating around the village.

Thanks to that, the forest which should have been dim looked bright, it was as if lights were on.

“Wow, there are so many adorable spirits!”

“Yes. As for the words of gratitude towards the saint who has saved the forest, I shall teach them later.”

“Well, there’s no need, because they’re so cute!”

“I see. If you say so, I’ll refrain from doing that.”

Philip sighed.

He was a good spirit, but still a little too tense. I wanted him to relax a little, like Douglas.

“...What a fantastic village. Thank you for inviting me, even though I’m but Eliane’s attendant.”

“It’s no problem. You’ve lent me Eliane, your citizen, Nigel. As such, I also have to thank you.”

Philip replied with a blunt tone. However, he certainly felt grateful.

“What’s the building on that tree?”

“That’s our dwelling. Spirit make their homes on trees.”

What a wonderful thing!

There were many brick and stone buildings in the kingdom of Verclain and Lynchgham. That’s because they were harder to burn and break.

Therefore, when I was looking at the spirits’ houses, which were not

only lined up but also made of wood, I felt excited. It was as if I had entered the world of fairy tales.

“You are also growing vegetables.”

Vegetable gardens spread everywhere.

“Indeed.”

“It seems that spirits also require sustenance. I thought you guys only need magical power...”

“Of course, the latter kind of spirit also exists. However, it is more fun to receive nutrition from food. It also helps us maintain our health. It’s common for spirits to eat something for substance nowadays.”

“Is that so... oh, the water is clean.”

“I’ve said this many time, but, it’s all thanks to you. When the water was still corrupted with miasma, we couldn’t consume it.”

By using purification magic on the forest, the miasma that had corrupted the water and plants had vanished.

Probably because of that.

Reverting to their former state, the plants and vegetables became fresh. The water was also transparent.

My attention was caught by the refreshing sight.

“Kyaa—!”

“Oops.”

Because of that, I was about to trip over a stone and fall.

However, Nigel quickly supported my body.

His tender palm felt warm.

“Haha, Eliane, how dangerous. You should keep your eyes on the road when walking.”

“So, sorry...”

“But it’s understandable why you did so, it’s such a wonderful place.”

Nigel laughed as he casually released me.

Hmm... Nigel may be my fiancé, but if he were to suddenly do something like that, I'd be embarrassed!

I wondered if I could really be his fiancée!

I was so nervous, I might die someday!

"Did you perhaps get tired of walking? Let's talk on top of this."

Before long, Philip stopped before a big tree.

H, how big...!

The top of the tree couldn't be seen from there.

Countless dwellings were also built on the branches of the thick tree.

"What's above this?"

"The top floor."

Philip said nothing further.

A ladder was also attached to the big tree.

But... how long does it take to reach the top floor?

I was scared of heights...

As I was beginning to feel anxious, Philip, as if he had read my heart...

"Don't worry, we'll arrive soon."

He snapped his finger.

In the next moment, both Nigel's and my feet stepped on something fluffy.

"Using this method, we'll reach the top floor."

Our bodies rose steadily to the point we couldn't see the ground.

I-it was too high—!

Not only that, it was also very scary—!

“Ni, Nigel!”

“Even for me, this is scary.”

However, it looked like Nigel was having fun.

I clung to Nigel’s body and closed my eyes until we reached the top. I desperately endured the fear.

“How scary...”

We were invited to Philip’s house. Inside, we sat in front of a table.

“I’m sorry. I will keep in mind that humans aren’t used to such height.”

“That’s right. From now on, please give a proper explanation before doing something like this.”

“I apolo—”

“—Apologizing is prohibited! Because I’m not angry!”

I said that as I put my hand over Philip’s mouth.

“U, umu...”

Philip was blushing a little—why...?

*“Enjoy the tea!”*

While I was pondering that, a dwarf-sized spirit carried tea on a tray.

Apparently, those young spirits, whom had light forms, were four years old in human years.

When they reached the age of eight, they gradually transformed into a person—just like the spirit that had delivered our tea.

However, spirits had different lifespan compared to humans.

The spirit arranging tea on the table looked very young, but was probably over 100 years old.

They were so different from human beings, I often found myself confused.

“Alright...”

Before sipping the tea, Philip cut to the chase.

“After lending us your aid, what does Lynchgiham require from us?”

# Chapter 57

## Both are Stubborn

From there, it became a serious discussion between kingdoms.

“I do not require anything in return.”

Nigel, who sat beside me, shrugged.

“I cannot allow that. We were saved by Eliane, and it is you who kindly lent us the power of the saint. To not give anything in return, that goes against our principles.”

“But...”

Nigel crossed his arms.

He was someone who would lend his aid towards a person in need without any hesitation. Even more so when it wouldn't bring any disadvantage to the kingdom.

I was sure he truly just wanted to help the spirits. Hence why he was unsure what to do.

“...”

Despite so, the spirit king, Philip, stared at Nigel as he waited for his reaction.

Apparently, no matter how much Nigel refused, Philip wouldn't give up.

Eventually, Nigel opened his mouth.

“If so, will you trade with us?”

“Some kind of transaction?”

“Indeed. The vegetables and water here are fresh. In Lynchgiham, they'd surely fetch a high price, and the market would be revitalized. Of course, the income will go to you, while we'll only take the profit. What do you think?”

*“Fumu. That’s not a big deal. I can even provide them for free.”*

*“That’s not the point. I want to trade. I won’t give up on this matter.”*

When it came to the kingdom, Nigel would become stubborn. He wasn’t going to step back no matter what Philip said.

*“I’m alright with giving away our water and vegetables for free. That’s not a lie. But, the ‘income’ you’ve mentioned—is it the currency commonly used among humans?”*

*“Well, that’s the original plan.”*

*“Us spirits do not require money. We have no place to spend it. To be honest, it would be like handing us useless items. If it became a common sight, what would the other spirits say?”*

*“But, it is not the case that it absolutely become an issue, correct? After all, we do not know what the future may bring.”*

*“I suppose that’s true.”*

Philip put his hand on his chin in contemplation.

It was the gaze of a king who thought about his kingdom. His eyes didn’t suit his boyish appearance.

*“However, that spirits do not require human currency is reasonable. In return for giving us water and vegetables, what do you want in return?”*

Philip was still quiet.

However, I felt his gaze on me.

*“That’s right. Once in a while, I would like for Eliane’s dishes to be served to other spirits.”*

Was what he said.

*“—M, my dishes?”*

Philip nodded.

*“The omelet rice I ate at the castle was excellent. Us spirits do not have much understanding over cooking. It’s kind of embarrassing, to be honest.”*

“So, you eat the vegetables raw?”

“Indeed.”

What a waste!

Even though they were such fresh vegetables!

Of course, eating them as they were would be delicious—but it still felt like a waste!

“That would surely satisfy the other spirits. Of course, when you want to do it would be up to you. What do you think?”

“I’m alright with that. But, would that suffice?”

“That’s already aplenty.”

When I looked at Nigel.

“If Eliane is fine with it, then there’s no problem.” He said to me.

If so, there was nothing to worry about.

“I understand. When I have free time, I shall travel from Lynchgiham to this village. I have no objection towards delivering food.”

“Alright, then...! That’s good enough! To think that I’ll be able to taste your cooking, again... I cannot help but look forward to it!”

Philip was excited.

Apparently, he really liked the other day’s omelet rice. I was honestly happy that someone else enjoyed my cooking.

Also, coming to cook meant that I’d be able to meet the cute spirits of the village again.

After learning they didn’t have much knowledge when it came to cooking, I wanted them to taste delicious food.

“Then, it has been decided. While the spirits provide us with their vegetables and water, she shall occasionally come to cook—is this okay?”

“No problem—however, there’s a condition. For a while, I want you to take charge of the trade. I really can’t trust other people.”



“I understand. If you want to stop trading with us, you can always say so. Of course, I shall do my utmost to ensure that we will keep trading.”

“Understood. Thank you.”

“Likewise.”

Nigel and Philip firmly shook hands.

Such a historical moment.

It'd be the first time that humans and spirits had joined hands in such a way, regardless of the method of exchange.

“Anyway... the prince of Lynchgiham sure is great—you're many times better than *that other prince*. ”

“Really?”

Philip nodded.

“I was wary of humans after the unpleasant treatment I received from that kingdom, but... who would have thought our negotiations would proceed this smoothly.”

“Well, not all humans are the same.”

“That's right. I feel stupid for avoiding diplomatic relations until now.”

Philip became slightly dejected.

That was when I suddenly became concerned.

“...Um, do you know how that other kingdom is doing right now?”

“... *That other kingdom?*”

Philip stared back at me.

“I do not know much about it. Two months have already passed since the last time I visited that kingdom.”

“I see...”

“However, I heard one interesting rumor. I do not know whether it's

true or false, though.”

“An interesting rumor?”

When I asked, Philip sipped his tea and continued.

“It seems that the demons have invaded the kingdom.”

“Oh, is that so?”

“You don’t seem too surprised.”

“Well, that’s only to be expected.”

Once the barrier was broken, that outcome was only natural.

Even so... it was quite late.

I sometimes inquired Nigel about the state of my former kingdom, but such information seems to have been kept secret.

If other kingdoms were to learn that my former kingdom was being invaded by demons, who knew what would happen?

Considering Claude’s personality, of course he’d try to conceal it.

However, someday, it would surely be exposed.

By the way, what was Prince Claude doing around that time...?

# Chapter 58

## The Countdown to the Kingdom's Extinction

The time rewound to a month ago.

Claude heard a report from his subordinate knight that an archdemon had invaded. His head blanked for a moment.

“...A, an archdemon!? If this is a joke, it's in bad taste!!”

As a result, Claude ran away from reality and decided that the report was nothing more than a lie.

However, the knight was undeterred.

“I'm not lying! The kingdom is currently experiencing great confusion due to said invasion!”

“T, that's impossible...”

Claude immediately went to the window.

That was when he witnessed something incredible.

“T, the royal capital... is being destroyed—!?”

Smoke was rising from buildings everywhere.

Creatures with wings were circling the sky above.

It was the depiction of hell.

The royal castle and the castle town had quite the distance between them, but even from there, the people's screams were loud and clear.

“W, when did this happen...?”

“J, just about 15 minutes ago?”

“What!? The royal capital was reduced to this in such a short time!?”

When asked by Claude, the knight nodded with a mysterious face.

“At first, there was only a single archdemon, but then they appeared

one after another. They won't stop coming! The knights are being pushed back!"

"How many demons have invaded the royal capital, exactly!?"

"I don't know the exact number, but including the lower and upper levels, there's probably more than a hundred!"

Upon hearing the report, Claude became dizzy.

*N, no way.*

He couldn't even maintain his posture, he could only lean against the nearby wall.

Demons were incomparable to normal monsters.

Even if it was only a lower demon, it boasted the same fighting power as a Behemoth.

It was said that a single archdemon could spell the destruction of an entire capital—

*— and there are many of them!? What is happening!?*

Towards the rapidly changing situation, Claude failed to keep pace.

"Claude, Claude, more importantly, look at me! My face, my face has become horrible!"

Leticia clung to Claude's clothes.

The knight who came to the room also noticed Leticia's abnormal condition, probably because she raised her face for a moment.

"Hyiii—! A monster—! Stay away from His Highness—!"

The knight unsheathed his sword and tried to attack Leticia.

However.

"Wait! She's Leticia!"

"Le, Leticia...!? What a foolish thing to say!! Leticia has a beautiful appearance!"

"Don't say such profanity! I don't even know what's going on. We

have to treat her!”

“But...”

It seemed that the knight was still confused.

Claude’s fiancée, Leticia.

After attempting to murder both Eliane and Nigel, she had suffered her just desserts. Her face had been scorched with a cursed flame.

Nothing of her former appearance remained.

“Claude, once Alberto, the SS-class adventurer, returns, he’ll surely overcome this situation. He may be an idiot, but when it comes to combat, we can count on him.”

“That’s right! Alberto! What is he doing!?”

Claude screamed.

“I, I don’t know!! I haven’t heard from him for the past few days!!”

“W, what did you say!?”

“I don’t think Alberto can resolve this situation! We have to ask for aid from the other kingdoms!”

“Don’t say stupid things! We won’t know what’ll happen once we do that!”

In fact, he didn’t think another kingdom could be bothered to help them.

—Claude’s deduction was strangely correct.

Until then, he had been doing all he could to find more ways to oppress the other kingdoms.

Military power, economy—every single aspect of his kingdom was more outstanding than other kingdoms.

With that power, he had been forcing them to submit to his.

Hence why, once the other kingdoms heard that his kingdom was in a pinch, would they even bother to help?

Of course they wouldn't!

On the contrary, they'd use that opportunity to destroy his kingdom!

"F, for now, give an urgent quest—! Not only to the knights, but also the adventurers—! It doesn't matter how many people we have to sacrifice—!"

Claude spewed out instructions that weren't even instructions.

Not only was his decision dimwitted, it was also too late.

"Ara, you don't need to do that anymore?"

He heard a voice.

When Claude and his friends turned to the entrance of the room, a tall man could be seen leaning his weight against a wall.

"Who are you!?"

"Fufu, nice to meet you. However, it's not like I'm required to give you proper greeting or anything—the prince of this kingdom is as ugly as usual."

At first glance, the voice sounded like a woman, but the appearance was definitely that of a beautiful man's.

His long silver hair flowed down, while his slender limbs were eye-catching. The beauty he possessed was otherworldly.

While Claude was speechless, the older sister-like man slowly approached them.

"Greetings, I'm Baldur."

The man—Baldur, offered his hand towards Claude, and said.

"By human standards, I'm what you'd call an archdemon."

# Chapter 59

## The Order of the Archdemon

“A, an archdemon!?”

Claude roared.

“L, lies!”

Claude tried to deny the reality unfolding before him, but to no avail.

He recalled the knight’s report.

Above all, entering the royal castle wouldn’t be easy for a mere outsider.

The fact that the dubious man stood there could be proof that he was indeed an archdemon.

“S, stay away from His Highness Claudeeee—!”

The knight who stood beside him slashed at the archdemon, Baldur.

However.

“How noisy. I’m currently talking to the prince. *Can you not?*”

Baldur pointed his index finger at the knight.

At that moment, the knight’s body gradually changed from his toes to stone.

“T, this is...!? I, can’t, move...”

In a blink of an eye, the knight was transformed into a statue. His sword remained in mid-swing.

“A man who can’t read the atmosphere won’t be popular, you know?”

Baldur gently pushed the statue and caused it to lay on the floor.

The knight no longer moved.

“—!!”

Claude was breathless.

As a result of rigorous training, the kingdom's knights had the power to intimidate other kingdoms.

Despite so, one of his prided knights was reduced to a stone in an instant!

*Trying to fight back is just foolish! I'll listen to what he has to say!*

Claude immediately decided so.

"Claude... Claude..."

Leticia, on the other hand, kept clutching her face as she groaned.

He wanted to cure Leticia right away, but there was something more pressing at the moment.

"First of all, where did the saint of this kingdom go? It seems that the barrier has ceased..."

"I, if it's the saint, she's right here!"

Claude pointed to Leticia.

"— *Ha!*" Baldur sarcastically scoffed.

"The saint? *Her*??? Come on, now, don't be foolish. As if someone like her could conjure up a barrier able to envelop the whole kingdom! She may have been proficient at cursing, but as for barrier magic? Nope. Not even worth mentioning."

Baldur spoke such while clutching his stomach.

*... Proficient... at cursing?*

What was Baldur saying?

Baldur lifted the chin of the confused Claude with his fingers.

"Don't lie? The next time you lie to me, I'll rip out your tongue."

"Hyii—!"

Claude briefly screamed.

Baldur grinned.



However, from his words and the atmosphere, Claude could comprehend that his threat was real.

“T, the saint, I banished that fake saint a long time ago! It’s because she had deceiving the whole kingdom!”

“Huh? Banished?”

A stupid voice leaked from Baldur’s mouth. It was very out of tune.

“What an imbecile. Even though she’s competent. Isn’t she the strongest saint of all time? For you to expel such a saint, are you a masochist, perhaps?”

“What are you talking about...”

“Ah, I see, you don’t even know that.”

Baldur quickly let go of his emotions.

“Your face is beautiful, so I thought it’d be fun to tease you a little. But it’s actually boring. I hate buffoons, you see.”

Then, Baldur turned towards Leticia.

“Oi, the ugly woman over there, what’s wrong with you?”

“Claude... Claude...”

“You can’t even answer my question... I wonder if it’s because your curse had been deflected back at you. How foolish you are—but you’re also a lucky idiot. I kill all women who’re more beautiful than me—so your life shall be spared.”

Baldur laughed.

*From a while ago, why did he keep mentioning curse!? It’s impossible for Leticia to have that kind of power...*

However, he was grateful that Baldur had even bothered to chitchat.

Should he be able to buy enough time, other knights might come to save him.

There were also adventurers scattered around the city.

Therefore, he should be able to overcome the situation for the time

being...

“Are you perhaps looking for help?”

Claude’s expectations were shattered to pieces after hearing the words spun by Baldur.

“Spoiler—no one’s going to save you. The royal capital has been seized by us demons.”

“What!? It’s been less than 30 minutes since demons invaded the royal capital!”

“Fifteen minutes were enough to conquer the royal capital. It would have been a different story if that annoying dragon had come, but that didn’t happen, either.”

Baldur smiled again and said to Claude.

“Okay, here’s my order—bring me to the king.”

“M, my father...?”

“Yes. Well, we can find him ourselves, but I don’t want to further defile the place. I also don’t want to get dirtied by human blood, so it’s more efficient to have you guide me.”

Baldur stared straight at Claude.

His true intentions couldn’t be read.

As expected of an archdemon. Baldur’s way of thinking was probably different from humans.

However, he was an archdemon still. He must be planning something wicked.

But, no matter what Baldur was planning, now that it had come to that, he had no choice but to bring him to the king.

*If I go against him, it’s likely that I’ll be killed! I shall adhere for now...*

Claude begrudgingly responded to Baldur’s order.

“I, I got it... just, don’t kill me, or Leticia—I can at least ask for that, right?”

“Hmm, who knows. Well, perhaps you guys still have some use. Looks like you can keep your lives for a while.”

Baldur stretched his back.

A kingdom that had been prospering for many years.

As of the present, it was about to collapse onto the ground.

# Chapter 60

## The Magic Research Institute

Afterwards, Nigel and I left the spirit village and returned to Lynchgiham.

“It has only been a short while, but it already feels like a long time has passed.”

The clear air of the spirit village was refreshing, but I also loved the capital—after all, it was filled with both life and people.

“I heard a report from the gatekeeper—apparently, there were no major incidents.”

Nigel said with a reassuring face.

“Is it because Douglas and Ralph did their duties properly?”

“Maybe.”

“Would you like to return to the royal castle? I want to lie down in my bed for the first time in a while...”

“I’ll return home after visiting the magic research institute.”

“Some kind of laboratory?”

Nigel held out a bottle and continued explaining.

“I want to analyze this water there. I do not believe it is just normal water—after all, it hails from the forest where the spirits live.”

“Certainly, I can feel that the water is brimming with magical power.”

“Right?”

“In that case, I shall accompany you. I too am curious.”

“Alright, let us go together.”

It seemed that our return to the royal castle would be postponed for a little longer.

Please be patient, Douglas, Ralph-chan!

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We've arrived in front of the magic research institute.

The whitewashed building put me at ease.

"I was wondering what kind of building it would be. So, this is how a magic research institute looks like..."

"Indeed. Moreover, the director here is also very competent. Let's head inside right away."

"Okay."

We stepped inside the laboratory.

Inside, people in white coats were busy moving around.

When they noticed Nigel's visit, they greeted him with graceful bows.

Nigel responded by raising his hand and proceeded to enter—so I followed him.

"Robert, it's been a long time."

After we had arrived at the innermost part of the laboratory.

A man was staring at a liquid container.

"Your Highness Nigel."

Responding to Nigel, he turned towards us.

"I shall introduce you to him, Eliane. He's Robert, the director of the magic research institute. He's a very amiable person.

If you have any questions, don't be afraid to ask."

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Robert. My name is Eliane."

I lifted the edge of my skirt and lowered my head.

The director, Robert, said, "*Hoo...*"

"Such a beautiful woman. Is she perhaps the fiancée you've

mentioned, Nigel?”

“Indeed.”

“My, I think she suits you well, Nigel. The two of you are the best couple.”

Robert extended his hand with a gentle smile, and we shook hands.

Even so...

*... This man is also very beautiful!*

His skin was morbidly white. He wore glasses with thin edges. The atmosphere he exuded was magnificent.

By the way... only a few people knew that I was Nigel's fiancée.

Until now, Nigel was stubborn and avoided having a fiancée.

“What's with the sudden visit, Your Highness Nigel? Do you need something?”

“I need you to take a look at this.”

Nigel showed Robert the water he had procured from the spirit king, Philip.

Robert observed it with interest.

“This water has high degree of magical purity.”

“Can you tell?”

“Yes. Where on earth did you get this?”

“I won't go into details right now, but I've made friends with the spirits. This is the water that once flowed through the spirit forest.”

“T, the spirits!?”

Robert raised his glasses.

“Speaking of spirits, there's also a theory that their race is the origin of magic!? It's a long-cherished wish of magic researchers to investigate their ecology. Until now, there's been little to no information about them. But... who would've thought Your Highness

Nigel would be able to bring back something like this!”

Robert looked excited.

It couldn't be helped.

Robert was surprised that we were able to bring back such water when the spirits themselves were already difficult to spot.

“I want you to analyze this here, in the magic research institute. What benefits does this water have?”

“I understand! Thank you! I will sacrifice my sleep for this!”

“No, you still have to sleep.”

Nigel laughed amusedly.

But soon, his face turned serious.

“You may have been aware of this, but let me remind you—the spirits may be the subject of research for you, but never do anything reckless, such as trying to imitate this water. If you incite the wrath of the spirits, the consequences will be severe. I want you to research with moderation. Think of my reputation as you proceed.”

He advised.

Robert responded with a serious expression.

“I understand. Something as foolish as trying to create an imitation... I never planned to do so from the very beginning.

Aside from the foolish magical researchers of *that military-obsessed kingdom*, rest assured that none of your own subordinates is thinking of doing such a thing.”

As Robert had said, the magic researchers of the kingdom of Verclaim were a little overkill.

Rumor had it that they were involved in rather perilous human experiments.

“I was a little worried when I heard the words ‘magic research institute’—but the place turned out to be fine.”

“Anyway, this water is really wonderful. For convenience, let's refer to

it as ‘spirit water’.”

Upon receiving the bottle of spirit water from Nigel, Robert examined it.

“I can’t say anything without a detailed analysis, but it’s safe to assume that we could easily make advanced potions by using this as a catalyst. Water with such a high magical purity is rare.”

“Potions!”

I heard that and interrupted.

“Do you also make potions here!?”

“Is the young lady also interested in potions?”

“Yes! Very!”

I leaned forward involuntarily.

Back in my former kingdom, whenever I got bored, I would read some books in the royal castle.

There was a book about people called ‘pharmacists’.

They’d make potions leisurely and peacefully in a workplace.

The potions made by said pharmacists would help various people and enrich everyone’s lives.

For a while now, I had been longing for such a life.

...Because I wasn’t allowed to do that!

“Eliane, if you’re so interested, would you like to assist Robert?”

“I, is that alright?”

“Of course. Robert, as I’ve mentioned before, this woman is an excellent healer and mentor, I’m sure she’d be a great help to you.”

“I was about to ask the same, especially after I heard about you from Nigel!”

Robert looked at me and smiled.

“You’re exhausted today, so why not come to the lab tomorrow? Let’s



make an advanced potion with this water.”

“Yes! Thank you!”

Even though I was but a helper, finally, my long-dreamed life of being a pharmacist!

...Well, actually, I was about to become a magic researcher, but I didn't care about the details.

# Chapter 61

## Suddenly, I Mastered Potion-Making

The next day.

I immediately went to visit the director of the magic research institute, Robert.

“Good morning.”

When I greeted him, Robert responded with a gentle smile.

“Why do you look so tired?”

“Well, it took me all night to analyze the spirit water. Before I realized it, morning had come.”

“Eh!? Are you alright!?”

“Hahaha, I’m alright. It’s my hobby, after all.”

Looking at the table, I saw the spirit water we gave to Robert yesterday. There were beakers and Erlenmeyer flasks nearby.

He seemed to like studying magic.

“Let’s start the research, Lady Eliane.”

“Thank you!”

I didn’t really like being called with such an honorific, but I was so captivated by the thought of making potions that I didn’t care about it.

I wanted to make potions soon!

“Has Eliane ever made a potion?”

“No, I’ve researched how to make them, but I didn’t really need to make one until now.”

“That’s right. After all, I heard that Eliane is an excellent healer. Maybe it’s faster to use healing magic rather than to make potions.”

While saying that, Robert picked up a potion.

“However, no matter how good Eliane is, there’s only one of you. You won’t be able to heal adventurers and knights who are on an expedition. At that time, if they were to get hurt, potions can help them.”

“That’s right. I think your profession is very meaningful to the world.”

When I said so, Robert nodded.

“First, put the spirit water in the beaker.”

A tiny amount of bluish water moved inside the beaker.

“The next part is easier said than done—pour healing magic into this water in a fixed amount.”

“Certainly, that sounds easy, but getting the feel for it will be difficult.”

“That’s not true. I’m sure Eliane will get the feel for it right away. First, let me try.”

Robert released magical power into the spirit water inside the beaker.

The water began to glow.

“Beautiful...”

“As I thought, that water is indeed wonderful. Since the purity of its magical power is high, infusing it with magical power is easy.”

Robert murmured.

When he stopped releasing magical power, the water returned to its original appearance.

However, I could tell that its contents were completely different from the previous one.

“The potion is completed.”

“How fast!”

“Haha, such isn’t the case. It’s because of the quality of the spirit water. Several materials must be combined to create a liquid that will

become a catalyst. However, this water is enough to be a catalyst as it is. Would you like to see?”

“Yes!”

Suppressing my excitement, I received the beaker from Robert.

Examining it, certainly, the water had healing ability. With that, one could easily heal scratches.

“It’s amazing!”

“Do you understand, now?”

“Yes.”

“It seems that you can also analyze magical power. Even so, I’m embarrassed to be praised directly... we researchers don’t often talk to users directly. It’s something we aren’t used to...”

Robert grew bashful.

Although he had an adult atmosphere, as of the moment, he was as innocent as a child.

To put it simply... how adorable!

“It’s my turn, next. Let me give it a try!”

Once again, Robert prepared a beaker with spirit water and handed it to me.

*Let’s see...*

Should I try to do it as if I was casting healing magic on others?

However, even though I followed Robert’s instruction, it didn’t go well...

“It’s difficult...”

“Which part is?”

“I can pour magical power, but adjusting it is hard. In the end, it remains water with high magical power.”

“Ordinary people have a hard time with just pouring magical power

alone. You're already great enough to be able to do so in first try."

Robert made a small thoughtful gesture, and then—

"—Excuse me."

Suddenly, my hands were held from behind.

"...!"

For some reason, I became breathless.

"Adjusting magical power, is like this..."

Robert assisted me by holding my hands.

...Doing it like that was certainly an easier method to understand it than just outright hear his explanation.

What he was doing wasn't strange.

However!

Him doing that that, it let me feel his breathing!

I felt like I was doing something wrong, and couldn't concentrate on adjusting my magical power!

*Eliane, what are you thinking!*

*You have a fiancé named Nigel!*

Be rRational! Eliane scolded me, so I regained my mind and concentrated on making potions.

*Bowaaaaa*

The spirit water began to glow in a familiar manner.

"I got the hang of it!"

"Such an intense light, this is...!"

I could hear Robert's surprised voice from behind.

Certainly, the light was even stronger than when he did it.

Eventually...

“...Done!”

I lifted the newly made potion inside the beaker and proclaimed loudly.

“E, Eliane, may I take a look?”

“Of course.”

I handed it to Robert.

While he was seriously studying the potion, the excited me asked.

“How is it!?”

Honestly, that was my first time, so it probably wouldn't amount to much...

...Or so I thought.

“H, how could this be! This... this is an advanced potion!”

Robert said with excitement.

“Advanced potion... you mean, the most effective potion?”

“Yes...!”

The potion Robert had created was low-level. It could heal simple wounds.

On the other hand, advanced potions were said to be able to heal fractures and major illnesses. In that kingdom, the stockpile was less than double digits, and it was very expensive for the commoners.

Also, I had heard that it took a long time to make one.

T-that...

“Did I make such a potion!?”

I pointed to myself and asked Robert.

He trembled.

“Yes, I can't make a definite conclusion without examining it in detail, but I think this potion is close to being an advanced one. For you to be able to make this in such a brief period of time!”

“Is, is it supposed to be an amazing thing?”

“Very aAmazing, the history of potion making will change! Originally, it'd take a year of training to just make a lower-level potion. But you, not only in an instant, you created an advanced potion...!”

Robert was stunned by what I had done.

*No, no!*

Today, I thought the best I would manage to make would be lower-level potions!

Despite that, I accidentally reached the pinnacle of potion-making!

What had I done!?

“I, it must be because the spirit water. I myself, am not—”

“Of course, the spirit water played a role. But should be impossible to just make an advanced potion on a whim—who are you!?”

“A, an ordinary healer! I'm just an ordinary healer that can be found everywhere!”

“There's no way such an ordinary healer exists...”

Robert sighed in astonishment.

As such, I became an extremely advanced pharmacist in a day.

# Chapter 62

## Let's go Meet the Spirits Again

Ever since then.

In regards to the advanced potions, after Robert and Nigel had a discussion, it was decided they would be stockpiled for the knights with the remaining to be sent to a reliable merchant.

After said discussion, I had such an exchange with Nigel.

“Eliane, I have a request...”

“Yes, I understand. I will go to the magic research institute on a regular basis to help make potions.”

“That’s a relief, then! Eliane sure knows me well. If you don’t like it, be sure to tell me right away.”

“That’s not the case... I’m happy to be of help.”

“I see. But why the gloomy expression?”

Because it was far from the life I expected as a pharmacist!

As a pharmacist, everything should’ve flowed more naturally, more slowly...

...But I accidentally made an advanced potion, instead!

However, I was honestly happy to be useful to others. I shall do my best without being discouraged.

Therefore, I went to the institute and spent my days helping make advanced potions. Suddenly, I recalled something.

“Shall I go visit the spirit village and serve them food?”

One day, when I was feeding Ralph katsuobushi, we had such an exchange.

*“Fumu, by the way, I heard you made a deal with the spirits. As usual, the saint loves to exceed expectation.”*



“Yes, although I don’t think it’s such a big deal.”

*“So the saint will cook food in exchange for getting supplies from the spirits... fumu, that sounds reasonable.”*

Ralph said such with a serious face.

“I was busy making potions, but things have calmed down. I believe this is a good opportunity.”

After an accumulated effort, I had made enough.

I was sure Philip and others would like it.

However, it’d took three days by carriage to reach that forest last time. It would be a long trip again, therefore I had to ask both Douglas and Ralph to keep watch in my stead.

As I thought so...

“It seems that you’re talking about something interesting—include me too.”

“Kyaa—!”

I suddenly heard a voice from behind. As I reflexively screamed, I turned around.

“Douglas, please stop erasing your existence and talking to me out of the blue! It surprises me!”

“Ahaha, isn’t it fun? Eliane is easy to surprise as always.”

Douglas laughed cheerfully.

“I heard about it before, but it seems that you’ve become acquainted with the spirits. As a dragon, I’ve hardly ever met one, as such, I want to meet them.”

“Well... that should be alright...”

In the meantime, who should be responsible for protecting the kingdom?

Did he perhaps sense my concern?

“Don’t worry about anything. That Nigel isn’t merely all-talk. He’ll

protect the kingdom well while we're away. Besides, this kingdom was originally relatively peaceful even without us. It seems that the only threat is *that other kingdom*. But such isn't the case anymore. We should be at ease."

He placed his hands on his waist as he said so.

"Could it be, you have been intending to go to the spirit forest since the beginning?"

"Don't mind that too much."

Douglas' face was full of confidence.

But there was a logic to his words.

Keeping Douglas locked away in the kingdom for defensive measures was too pitiful.

That was basically the same thing my former kingdom had done to me.

Just because I would be stepping out of the kingdom didn't mean that my barrier would disappear. As such, I should not overthink it.

"I understand. This time around, I'll bring Douglas."

"Then it's decided."

*"Mufu, then this Ralph shall be keeping watch once again?"*

Ralph's tail hung down sadly.

"Does Ralph want to come with us?"

*"No, it's no problem. Besides, if the dragon and Ralph, a divine beast, were to visit together, the spirits would be overwhelmed. They're timid by nature. Ralph also won't be lonely without Eliane."*

It seemed like he was insisting that he wasn't lonely.

Well, if Ralph were to speak such, I had no choice but to leave it to him.

I had Douglas use storage magic to bring some things.

I did not believe there was going to be a need to use such an amazing

magic because everything would fit in a slightly larger bag... but let's not care about the details.

"Let's go."

"Leave it to me."

When I was about to have a carriage prepared, Douglas suddenly bridled and carried me.

"What are you doing!?"

"It'll be faster to run with you like before. I could transform into a dragon just fine, but that'd throw the city into a fuss."

'A dragon has appeared!'

If news regarding the sighting were to leak, everyone'd panic.

But, that was not the problem as of the present!

"Let's use the carriage! We are not in a rush!"

"Why are you hesitating? There's no problem in arriving faster. We'll be there soon, in the meantime, sleep."

Without hearing my objection, Douglas started running.

H, how fast!

As I was held by Douglas, my heart started pounding faster.

I knew that would happen, that was why I was reluctant towards inviting Douglas!

As Douglas had said, it took less than half a day for us to reach the village even with a break along the way.

...But, as if I could fall asleep like that.

# Chapter 63

## The Perfect Dish for Summer

“Oh, so this is the village of the spirits?”

Upon arriving at the spirit village, Douglas curiously looked around.

By the way, anyone could enter the forest if they so wanted, but they’d never find the village. That was because there were barriers.

However, when we arrived in front of the village, the barriers naturally disappeared and we were able to enter.

Did the spirits know I was coming?

“Come on, Douglas. Don’t linger around too much.”

Although I beckoned to him, Douglas sniffed a nearby leaf without paying attention to me.

By the time I arrived, I was exhausted. There was not much I could do.

Indeed, the entire way there, I was carried by Douglas. By ‘exhausted’, I mean mentally exhausted.

*“Dragon.” “Dragon.”*

Once we did, small lights fluttered around Douglas.

They were young spirits.

“Is this a spirit? How amazing, you can tell that I’m a dragon.”

*“Of course.”*

*“He’s going to burn our village down. I have to tell the king.”*

What carefree voices.

Although what was declared was disturbing, there was no sense of crisis in the voices of the spirits in question.

“Oh, it’ll be fine. Douglas is a kind-hearted dragon. You don’t have to

be anxious.”

When I tried to back Douglas up.

“Eliane, so you’ve come.”

Philip appeared out of nowhere.

“He is... a dragon? Why is Eliane with a dragon?”

Douglas stared at us dubiously.

“Actually...”

...Or was I supposed to keep it a secret?

I just let Douglas explain.

“I see... so he’s also a resident of the Lynchgiham? It’s not about him, we just don’t have particularly good memories regarding dragons... I’m sorry for being cautious.”

“Don’t have particularly good memories? Did something happen?”

“Indeed. Once upon a time, I was chased around. Well, the dragon was probably trying to have fun. Even so, ever since then, I haven’t been fond of them.”

It sounded like he was chased by a dog.

“Is that so... but don’t worry. Douglas is a good dragon, although he may be a bit reckless.”

“If Eliane says so, I’ll trust you.”

“Hey, wait a minute. Just now, did someone insult me...?”

Douglas asked, but I ignored him.

“Well, it’s lunch time, and here I am. Have Philip and the others had lunch, yet?”

When I asked, Philip nodded.

“Eliane, don’t ignore me. Our talk isn’t over—”

“Well then, Douglas, won’t you take out the arrangements I’ve brought from Lynchgiham?”

“Tch ...I understand.”

Because I kept ignoring him, Douglas may had given up. After clicking his tongue, he took something out of his storage magic.

Philip stared at it seriously.

“For today’s lunch, I’m making cold somen.”

“Cold somen?”

“It seems to be a dish that is commonly eaten in Eastern countries. I will make it right away, so please wait for a bit.”

I started cooking.

Since I had prepared the noodles, the set, etc, it wasn’t too troublesome to make.

Apparently, there was no such thing as a kitchen in the spirit village. It was quite difficult to cook.

Therefore, it was necessary to prepare before coming.

After having Douglas magically set the fire, I boiled the somen noodles.

Of course, the pot had been filled with plenty of spirit water.

The water was excellent as a catalyst for potion-making, but was also delicious as it was. That had been proven.

I put ice in a deep bowl and then filled it with more spirit water.

After the noodles were boiled, I poured the chilled somen into a bowl and it was completed.

“Please enjoy.”

It was the village’s square.

There were also some wooden tables, so we decided to eat the chilled somen there.

While I prepared the food, others spirits of various sizes gathered in the plaza.

It had become lively.

“Then, let’s eat it right away.”

Philip dexterously scooped the noodles with a fork and carried it to his mouth.

“It’s deliciouuuuus!”

His eyes widened.

“Isn’t it?”

“It’s a simple dish, but also very delicious. The refreshing seasoning goes well with the hot summer.”

“I’m glad you said that.”

When Philip ate, other spirits also ate the chilled somen.

By the way, aside from the dwarf-sized spirits, when I was paying attention to how the young spirits eat, I saw them magically lifting the noodles and eating them little by little.

From my perspective, the somen seemed to disappear little by little.

There was no problem as long as they could eat it.

“What is this sauce? It’s something I have never tasted before!”

“It’s ‘mentsuyu’. A lot of work was required for it a I had to start with fermenting the soybeans.”

“I see... so that’s it...”

Then Philip ate the somen noodles.

“But it’s a bit difficult to eat.”

“Is that so? Well...”

I took out a certain tableware, A tableware that resembled two short sticks.

“Those are?”

“They’re called ‘chopsticks.’ This is also a tableware commonly used in the East. I think it’s difficult to use, but once you get used to it, it’ll be

easier for you to eat the somen.”

“Is that so? I’ll try them right away.”

Philip received chopsticks from me and tried to eat the somen.

“Hmm... how do I use it?”

“This is how you should do it.”

To Philip, who stared at the chopsticks with uncertainty, I gave a lecture on how to hold them.

“It certainly is easier to eat with these.”

In the blink of an eye, he used the chopsticks dexterously and squeezed the somen.

Because his bowl was almost empty, I added some more somen.

“Hey, Eliane, you should also eat more. From the perspective of a dragon, humans eat too little.”

“Yes, yes. Other than that, Douglas, you sure are getting better at using chopsticks.”

“Don’t say foolish things—I’m a dragon, after all. It’s easier for me to use tableware than humans.”

Although Douglas said that as a matter-of-fact, when he first came to Lynchgiham, he was trying to eat barehanded.

I thought that wouldn’t do, so I taught him... and now, he was good at using chopsticks.

After a while, the noodles I brought were gone.

The chilled somen had been completely devoured.

“That was delicious.”

Perhaps feeling full, Philip looked happy. It was hard to understand because he was the kind of spirit who wouldn’t show much emotion.

“It was good, but it’s not over yet.”

“There’s still more?”



I felt Philip's eyes gleaming in anticipation.

"Yes. There is always dessert after a meal—please wait a moment, Douglas?"

"Okay."

First were the eggs and milk I had Douglas to bring with his storage magic. Afterwards, I also requested sugar and fresh cream.

"First, warm the cream and milk..."

In the meantime, mix the egg yolk and sugar within a bowl and stir.

Once it was fully cooked, add a mixture of fresh cream and milk to the bowl little by little—

—then, stir...

"Then, the final touch—Douglas."

"It's rude to take advantage of me like this."

Douglas complained, but still blew inside the container.

Of course, it wasn't a mere breath.

Small ice crystals were mixed in, solidifying the inside of the container in the blink of an eye.

"The dessert is 'ice cream'. Please enjoy."

I gave spoons to the spirits and had them eat ice cream.

"It's cool and delicious. I envy humans for eating this kind of food every day."

"Not every day, it's a luxury because we only occasionally have it."

The ice cream seemed to be more popular than the chilled somen. No matter how much I made, it was devoured in a moment.

Should I be relieved that even the young spirits seemed to relish it?

Not just Philip,

"Yummy..."

*“The saint is good at cooking...”*

*“How brilliant of her...”*

Other spirits were also screaming.

“Eliane, let me eat the ice cream as soon as possible!”

“Wait a moment, Douglas. You’ll have your share later. Right now, the spirits are of the utmost priority.”

“That doesn’t bode well with me...”

“Even though you already ate a lot back in Lynchgiham.”

Eventually, the ice cream was gone.

“Thank you very much, Eliane. We are happy at being able to eat such delicious food.”

Philip thanked me.

“No, that’s not the case. I was able to cook delicious food because your water is good.”

“But, is it, really? Is it really fair to reward such delicious food with mere vegetables and water?”

“Of course. Rather, I’m the one who’d like to thank you. As expected, doing this every day is impossible, but I’ll continue to regularly come to cook.”

I smiled at Philip.

I gave him the money I had received from Nigel in advance, but Philip and his friends didn’t seem to be very interested.

It seemed that the money circulating in the human world didn’t matter to them.

“Oh, that’s right, I was hoping for Eliane to see this when she came.”

As Philip snapped his fingers, another spirit brought a box out of nowhere and presented it to us.

“Look at this. If you can open this box, its contents shall be yours.”

# Chapter 64

## A Mysterious Sword

I received the box from Philip.

It was quite big. It was a size that I, a woman, could only hold by using both hands.

“Can I open it?”

“Yes.”

After my question, Philip suddenly started explaining.

“It’s a treasure chest that has been passed down from generation to generation. *‘If something were to happen, use the contents of this box’*—however, until now, no one has been able to open it. I don’t even know what’s inside.”

Philip shrugged.

It was an old treasure chest.

It looked tattered—probably because it was exposed to rain and the wind for a long time.

However, it was tightly sealed, and was unlikely to be opened easily.

“Can you give it a try?”

“Of course.”

I tried touching the treasure chest and pulled the lid with all my might  
—

—however.

“It’s really hard...”

The treasure chest barely even budged.

“This seems to be difficult.”

“Is that so?”

I let go of the treasure chest.

Hmm... was it originally designed to be difficult to open?

Or was it left unattended for so long, the lock naturally broke and couldn't be opened?

"Eliane, may I give it a try?"

"Sure."

Douglas looked with interest, so I handed him the treasure chest.

On the other hand, I continued to talk to Philip.

"Don't you have any idea to what's inside?"

"Yes, but according to the legend, when the time is right, the box will open naturally..."

"I see. Maybe the right time hasn't arrived..."

"That may be so. But it's been in the village warehouse for so long, everyone is beginning to forget about the legend. As such, would it not be better to give it to the right person? I've thought about it."

From long ago...

That meant...

"Couldn't the saint who visited here 200 years ago open it?"

"I requested her, alright, but the result is as you can see."

"Is that so..."

If not even the saint could open it, I doubt the box was designed to be opened...

I felt bad for Philip. Apparently, I won't be able to meet his expectations.

"Hey, it's open."

While I was in thought, I suddenly heard Douglas' voice. Everyone turned around all at once.

"Oh, it's open!?"

I involuntarily made a strange voice.

When I turned around, the treasure chest that wouldn't budge no matter what I did had been opened—just like that.

Douglas was like, “Did I do something wrong?”

“How did you open it?”

“Normally, just like I would a normal box.”

When I heard that, my shoulders sagged.

“That easily?”

“That said, I didn't use much force either. As such, the box didn't break—how is it? Aren't I amazing?”

Douglas was very excited.

No, it was actually amazing, but for him to have opened it just like that. I lost my momentum.

“Is this a sword...?”

Philip also looked in from the side and took out what was inside the box.

“It appears to be so.”

“But it's already so rusted. You won't be able to use it like this.”

It was as Philip said—both the blade and the handle had rusted to a dark brown. As it was, that sword wouldn't be able to cut a single leaf.

I also felt like it could break if it was held too tightly.

“Did it rust from being in that box for too long...?”

“Maybe.”

“Can I take a look?”

Philip agreed and carefully handed me the sword.

Ugh... it's heavy.

Looking at it closely, my impression of the sword didn't change.

However.

“Douglas.”

“Yes, I feel it too. It contains a small amount of magical power.”

Douglas turned his keen eyes on the old sword.

“Magic power?”

Philip asked us.

“Yes, but it isn’t uncommon for swords to contain magical power. These sorts of swords are often distributed in Lynchgiham, but...”

“It’s a strange magical power—it feels as if something is... *dormant*. ”

It was as Douglas said.

The magical power contained within the sword wasn’t just small, but also constricted. I felt such a strange magical power.

However, I didn’t know anything more than that. Thus, we had no choice but to tilt our heads.

“Is that so? But—I still want to give the sword to Eliane and the others.”

“I can’t receive such an important item.”

Albeit rusty, the sword had also been contained within a box that had been passed down from generation to generation.

I felt truly reluctant to receive it.

But Philip shook his head.

“Either way, even if we keep it, it’ll only collect dust. I overheard during the meal— Lynchgiham has a magic research institute? If so, I’d like you to analyze the sword there.”

“Is that alright with you?”

“Yes. If the result says it’s useless, you can throw it away or return it to us.”

“But...”

“Spirits are beings that keep their promises. Let me keep my words.”

Stubbornly, Philip refused to keep the sword.

At that rate, we wouldn't get anywhere.

Philip had a serious personality, and I felt like he wouldn't change his mind no matter what I said.

“I understand. Then, can I have it entrusted to me instead of being given it?”

“If that is what Eliane want.”

Hearing what I said, Philip's expression slightly softened.

Such was how we got a souvenir(?) as we left the spirit village.

## Chapter 65

The Advanced Potion was Super-Class

I entrusted the rusty sword I received from Philip with Nigel.

“All I see is a rusty sword, but it's also a sword that was passed down for generations by the spirits. I'll keep it in a safe place.” Said Nigel.

I didn't hesitate to leave it to him.

One day, Nigel and I were summoned to the magic research institute.

What did they want?

“Robert, and even Nigel are here...”

When I went to the director's office, there stood Robert. Prince Nigel stood before a large potion.

“We need to talk about the advanced potions made by Eliane.”

Robert cut to the chase.

*Ah, my potions...*

Around that time, I had completely lost my passion for potions.

It was because as a pharmacist, I had reached the pinnacle.

I always had the tendency to bore of doing things—Maybe I tired of things too easily?

“I’m sure you said something about stockpiling them and sending the rest to merchants...”

“Yes, but until now, just to mass-produce the advanced-potion, I had to measure their effects. As such, I didn’t have time to price it or find a merchant.”

“Oh, that kind of thing...”

“Eliane doesn’t seem to be very interested...”

Nigel shook his head for some reason as I spoke to Robert.

“That’s not the case. I love making potions.”

“Just now, you didn’t sound very convincing.”

Nigel was probably able to tell I was lying right away—as such, I averted my gaze.

“Therefore, I shall announce the outcome of researching the advanced potions.”

I’d be lying if I said I was holding my breath, but it was also strange for Robert to just summon me like that—I was a bit excited.

*“I thought they were advanced potions, but I was mistaken!”*

I wondered if he was going to say that...

Getting showered with praise would be uncomfortable, but the current situation was also awkward!

But my expectations were betrayed.

“Congratulations, this is an authentic advanced potion.”

...Okay?

I was somehow able predict that outcome.

However, that didn’t seem to be the only thing he was going to say.

“I also discovered that they were of a higher grade among the



advanced potions. Let's call them super-class potions."

The news was actually bigger than I thought.

"Wow. This make me so happy."

"Spoken in monotone!?"

Nigel retorted. Neither happy nor sad—I felt hollow.

"Eliane is amazing. She doesn't just excel in healing and barrier magic, but also potion-making."

"No, that's not true."

I told Nigel with bleak eyes.

Robert continued speaking.

"Now, about the future of this super-class potion. As I've said before, I'm going to provide some to merchants. Is that alright?"

"Yes, please do so, Robert."

The fact that Nigel was here meant that they had already discussed it.

The price wasn't important, personally.

The raw material was just water, and even though we paid the spirits for it, I didn't care if the actual potion was given away for free.

However, if an appropriate price wasn't attached, a price collapse among other potions could arise.

Free was great, but not everything was a virtue.

"Thus, the price for when they are sent to merchants will be as such."

When I heard the price, my eyes almost pop out.

"T, that expensive!?"

"Yes."

Robert said with unchanging expression.

The price I heard from him was so exceptional that a house could probably be built from the sale of just one super-class potion.

“Considering the price, will it even sell?”

“I think it’ll still be flooded with customers? When I talked to people I could trust, they immediately raised their hands. I think it’s a bit cheaper, but for now, let’s see how it goes.”

No matter how super-class it was, would one potion be enough?

It seemed that adventurers would play a central role in buying them, instead of the aristocrats.

It was obvious they wouldn’t be able to match the wealth of aristocrats—I honestly felt the price was too expensive.

...Well, if it sold too much, we wouldn’t be able to keep up with demand—maybe the current situation was appropriate.

—However, how naïve I was!

The potions I created were far better than I anticipated.

# Chapter 66

## Let's Make Holy Water

The sales of the super-class potions were immediately apparent.

The next day.

I was summoned again by Robert. Thus, I headed to the magic research institute.

“I have news regarding the super-class potions.”

Robert started talking in a heavy atmosphere.

*Huh?*

That atmosphere... what happened?

Did it not sell, after all?

Well, the price was that expensive. No matter how effective the potion was, it couldn't be helped.

“Robert, it's okay. I don't care if it doesn't sell.”

Within my smile was a feeling of relief. *‘Yes! I'm glad I didn't become too great!’*

“Huh?”

However, Robert stared at me and asked the following question.

“What are you talking about?”

“Eh?”

The heavy atmosphere was dispersed immediately. With a softened expression, Robert said.

“The super-class potions are sold out!”

*... Sold out?*

“Wait, didn't you put five extra potions out for sale?”

“That’s right. There were some merchants who sought the super-class potions. The merchants I talked to are reliable.”

“As a result, the potions are sold out?”

“Yes.”

My goodness!

A house could be built with the money acquired from selling one super-class potion!

In other words, five houses could be built!

That amount of money was too extravagant, I lost grip of reality!

“Is that true?!”

“Indeed. Apparently, it’s even more valuable than we thought. We have to rethink the price...” Said Robert.

Although he was the one who said that, I was still in disbelief.

However, when I thought about it—could it be, he didn’t sell it directly to the adventurers?

“Well, since they’re the merchants, they might sell them to the aristocrats... or more like, is that their intention?”

“It might be. But I heard that it’s not so—they are going to sell them to famous adventurer parties and guilds.”

“W, would it sell? A party would have a healer, right? Is there that much demand?”

“Of course, and I plan to sell them at the price stated yesterday. However, the situation seems to be a little different, now.

The demand for the potions has sharply increased.”

“What happened?”

When asked, Robert begun to speak.

“Did you know that a new dungeon has appeared in Lynchgiham’s territory?”

“Yes, and because of that, Nigel’s workload increased... I heard that it’s located near the spirits’ village.”

“That’s right.”

Dungeons were places where many monsters lived. Their insides were intricate, just like a maze, and they were also full of traps.

They’re very dangerous.

On the other hand, they are also places where valuable monster materials can be collected. Discovering treasures is also possible.

Dungeons can be generated in two ways.

When monsters gather for some reason, a dungeon would gradually form. On the other hand, there were also cases where dungeons suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

There were various theories regarding the latter, but it seemed that even dungeons themselves were considered creatures—I didn’t know the details.

“Does that mean the demand for the potions increased because a dungeon has been generated, and the number of adventurers going there has risen?”

“Yes... and apparently, there are many undead in the dungeon.”

“That’s tough...”

“Are you also well informed about the undead?”

“Well, not only am I a healer, I’m also a scholar.”

The most known example of undead were skeletons, bodies that were fully consisted of bones. There were also other types such as the Death Masters who preyed upon the souls of the living. Those monsters were often powerful from the beginning.

However, their most troublesome characteristic of was the fact that they were all immune to ordinary attacks.

To deal with them, holy magic and weapons were necessary.

“They seem to be having a hard time conquering that dungeon. That doesn’t mean we should just leave the dungeon alone either. If left

unattended, the number of monsters in the dungeon will increase and they might invade the nearby city.”

“Exactly.”

I understood.

It was said that there was an effective means to defeat undead monsters without holy magic or weapons—

—using potions.

Potions seemed to be natural enemies for those whom were closer to the dead than the living.

However, in the end, the effect was less than of holy magic and weapons, and only seemed to serve as a temporary relief.

I suddenly came up with an idea.

“Why don’t we make holy water using the spirit water?”

“Holy water...? It’s a fictitious item that often appears in adventure novels, isn’t it?”

“It’s basically water with holy attribute magic. With this, anyone can easily defeat the undead. Don’t you think it’s worth trying?”

“If it can be mass-produced, the dungeon capture will progress a long way. The lords of nearby cities would be delighted.

Making holy water is also a long-cherished wish of us magic researchers, but...”

Robert had a bitter look.

From his expression alone, one could infer how unrealistic holy water making was.

However, at that moment in time, I already had a blueprint for the holy water in my head.

*Un.*

It was possible.

“Lend it to me.”

I poured my magic into the remaining spirit water.

The water then began to glow a pale green.

“I tried to add holy magic, what do you think?”

“There’s no way someone could do it that easy—what!?”

Robert picked up the beaker containing the green liquid and his eyes widened.

“This water is truly imbued with holy magic!? This seems to be effective against the undead!”

“Hence I said, it’s worth trying.”

Of course, it was merely a prototype.

However, it seemed that mass-producing holy water under any kind of circumstance was no longer a pipe dream.

“L-let me aid you! This will give rise to a revolution!”

“I will be in your care.”

Robert firmly held my hand with both of his.

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We successfully developed the holy water and put it up for sale the same way as the super-class potions.

Then...

“It’s a big, big, big success!”

Robert uttered loudly in the director’s office.

It was quite unusual for him to be that excited.

“... *Hence I said—*”

“Indeed...! At first, I was skeptical, but we truly created holy water! Who are you—”

“—I’m just a healer you can find everywhere.”

“I’ve said this many times, but there are no other healers like you!”

Robert concluded.

Apparently, the holy water we developed were bought by the adventurers like hot cakes. It was even called an ‘the undead hunting revolution’.

The number of people who went to the dungeon and returned injured was dramatically reduced, and we were truly grateful.

Afterwards.

I heard that the dungeon capture went smoothly and that it was only a matter of time until it’d be conquered.



# Chapter 67

## My Feelings

The holy water-making was a great success, and for the first time in a while, I was relaxing in my room.

“I’ve been busy lately...”

I sat on the bed and reminisced.

Looking back, these past few days were tumultuous.

Not only had I helped the spirit king, I also made holy water. In addition, I regularly went to the spirit village to let them enjoy my cooking.

By the way... ever since then, I had served various dishes to the spirits.

Everything seemed to satisfy the tongues of the spirits. Philip even said, “I’m really glad I met you.”

I wasn’t doing that so that they’d be indebted to me, but because I wanted to be of help. Of course, I was glad to be praised.

Our friendship with the spirits, which was full of questions at first, proceeded very smoothly because of that.

It seemed that the potions and the holy water I made were still in high demand. Even so, Robert and Nigel were controlling the situation.

When people made mistakes, they were likely to come for potions and holy water.

If handled poorly, the demand for water, a ingredient, would inevitably increase. It could even result in the spirits of peaceful that village getting disturbed.

Of course, neither Nigel nor I wanted such an outcome.

Despite the minor mess, I had a fulfilling day.

But what was it...?

Inside my heart, there was some kind of uncertainty...

It was as if there was a gap somewhere in my heart...

I felt like I had forgotten something important.

"It's strange. There shouldn't have been any problems..."

I muttered to myself.

*Ton, ton.*

The sound of knocking on the door.

"It's me, Nigel. Eliane, can you give me a moment?"

"Nigel? Alright, please come in."

I invited him into my room.

"Excuse me."

Nigel was as cool as usual.

"What's wrong, Nigel? How unusual of you."

"No, it's just... we haven't had a proper conversation lately. I want to converse with you, are you alright with that?"

"Of course."

Nigel sat across of me.

When I was about to prepare tea—

"—I can't let Eliane do that."

Nigel attempted to stop me.

However.

"Don't worry. I'm doing it because I want to."

"But, still..."

"That should be my line. I can't have something as ridiculous as making His Highness prepare tea."

...Or, was someone like His highness familiar with preparing black tea?

While having a small talk, I prepared tea for two.

The smell of herbs tickled the bridge of my nose.

Nigel sipped his cup of tea.

“It’s delicious. No matter what you make, Eliane, it’s always top notch.”

“That’s not true. Isn’t the tea prepared by Abby better?”

In fact, I’ve had a few mini tea parties with Abby. The tea she made was truly exceptional.

During those times, I was taught how to prepare tea. The rest was history.

“How do I say this? Abby’s tea is indeed exquisite, but so is Eliane’s.”

Nigel gracefully sipped his tea.

Everything he did was as graceful as a scene from a play.

...Huh!?

Maybe... no, not maybe—

—I was currently alone with Nigel!?

What was more, even though we weren’t married—even though I was merely his fiancée—I invited a man into the room...

...wouldn’t he think I was a terrible woman!?

“What’s wrong, Eliane? Look at me.”

“N, nothing...”

To calm myself, I also took a sip of my tea.

Fortunately, the scent of herbs calmed my mind.

For a while after that, we discussed about adding flowers to the tea.

“Elaine, you seem to be very busy lately, aren’t you exhausted? When

I look at Eliane these days, I feel kind of worried...”

By looking at him, I knew that was the main subject.

But why?

“I, it’s alright. I’m enjoying myself every day.”

I behaved cheerfully so as to not worry Nigel.

I was sure he was worried about me whom had been busy lately.

I was allowed to live in such a magnificent royal castle, and I was allowed to do as I pleased.

I had no complaints.

I didn’t want to worry Nigel.

I focused on that feeling.

“I see. That’s fine, then.”

Nigel’s smile was akin to a flower.

“Lately, we haven’t been talking. I was worried about your physical condition, but I wondered if you’d find such feelings unwelcome.”

“...!”

He must be joking.

I didn’t think Nigel actually intended to say that either.

He must have spoken without thinking.

To me, it sounded like he was saying, *“we’re engaged, but aren’t you neglecting me too much?”*

Hence why,

“I’m sorry... perhaps, I don’t really understand Nigel’s feelings.”

“Eliane?”

“From now on, I shall behave more like a fiancée...!”

Before I realized it, words were coming out of my mouth one after

another.

Otherwise, I'd have been torn apart by my emotions.

At the same time, it was as if I was making an excuse.

"Eliane."

Nigel called my name once again.

The next moment.

As he gently stroked my head, Nigel pulled me into an embrace.

"I'm sorry for making you anxious. That's not what I meant. I love Eliane. I just want to talk more with you."

"Nigel..."

Mysteriously, my heart gradually calmed down as a result of Nigel's action.

He didn't have the peculiar, sweaty, smell of a man.

Instead, it was as if I was in a garden of roses.

"I'm sorry for behaving a little too aggressive. It's late. I'll return to my own room soon."

Thus, Nigel stood up.

"Y, yes! Thank you for today! I'm glad I was able to have a proper conversation with you for the first time in a while!"

"That should be my line. The tea you prepared was delicious. When we have time, let's have another tea party." After saying so, Nigel left.

The moment he left the room, the tension and exhaustion I had been suppressing so far began to weight down on my shoulders.

I rested my body on the back of the chair.

"...Just then, what happened to me...?"

Thinking that I was disliked by Nigel, I suddenly lost control of my emotions.

I loved Nigel. I had no complaints about him.

It was still difficult for me to believe that we were engaged.

But on the contrary, that was precisely the problem.

Nigel was perfect.

Moreover, he was the first prince of that kingdom.

Eventually, I'd be required to stand next to Nigel and behave like a proper queen.

"Well, of course, if it's Nigel, he would shrug it off..."

Despite that, no matter what he thought, until I actually became a queen, there was no way he could say that.

Everything was different from when I was with Prince Claude.

It was a one-sided engagement. The only reason I was betrothed to him was because I was the saint. Such was the tradition. Despite so, not once had he recognized me as the future queen.

I tried to love him, but failed.

"...Everything is going so well for me right now, it's honestly becoming scary..."

I muttered alone.

Unconsciously, I may have avoided Nigel because I just couldn't see myself being his fiancée.

Hence why, I busied myself.

Today, by talking with Nigel, I had become aware of those feelings.

"What would others do at a time like this... let's talk to Abby..."

During such cases, it seemed that Abby, whom was of the same gender, would make for a better conversation partner than Douglas, a male (?)

Even if I talked to Douglas, his response would most likely be, "*Why do humans torment themselves over useless crap?*"

"It's alright. Surely, time will fix everything... I believe so."

I said to myself.

*Let's call it a day.*

By retiring to my bed, a fresh batch of ideas might come to me.

However, Nigel's words swirled in my head and kept me awake.

# Chapter 68

## The Controlling and the Controlled

□ Prince Claude's POV

Meanwhile, back in the kingdom.

As of the present, Claude was before His Majesty the King.

Baldur stood beside him. He was none other than the archdemon whom had invaded the kingdom and ordered Claude to bring him to the king.

Originally, he didn't want to meet his father— *because of course his father would be mad at him!*

But... the archdemon was too dangerous. Going against his order was too stupid.

The castle was naturally on high alert.

Of course, the meeting between the archdemon and His Majesty the King didn't merely involve those three.

Some knights were sighing as they watched over them. They were prepared to throw away their lives for the king.

Claude really wanted to tighten the security, but Baldur had emphasized. *"I find crowds annoying."*

By the way, Saint Leticia had been left in her chamber.

Naturally, Claude was reluctant to tell His Majesty the King about Leticia's face.

"O Demon, why have you come to the Kingdom of Verclaim? I'll listen to your wishes."

The king spoke to Baldur with a magnificent attitude. However, his hands were trembling. Even the king was scared.

The fact that the royal capital had been captured should've reached his ears.



“Baldur. Please refer to me by name. Let us get along with each other.”

Baldur clicked his tongue.

“I, I understand, Baldur, I’ll never bring it up again.”

“Good.”

In Claude’s eyes, the king seemed to be taking the utmost care to not anger Baldur.

However, Baldur couldn’t be won over.

Even with his thoughts intermingled, it was easy for Claude to see.

*Father is too kind. He should’ve just been straightforward with Baldur. Dealing with all the knights in the castle has to be a pain, even for a demon like him.*

Despite the situation, Claude was still naïve.

Baldur continued.

“I heard about it—Saint Eliane has been banished. Were you aware of this?”

“Oh, about that... I left the matter of the saint in Claude’s hand. Truth to be told, that slipped my mind.”

As for Saint Eliane, the king no longer cared.

Therefore, when the king received the report regarding the annulment and the banishment of the saint, he only replied with a simple, ‘yes’.

“Looking back, the former saint, who was my queen, was also a dubious person. The only reason I married her was because the ministers urged me—saying things like, *‘the woman’s power is real.’*”

The king had long been dissatisfied with the kingdom’s tradition regarding saints.

The only reason he participated in the tradition was because those idiot ministers and sages kept urging him.

Hence why, right when the king began his reign, he gradually purged the kingdom of those devout people. The purge had been completed.

As such, there was no obstacles to banishing the saint.

That might be why even though Claude was still a prince, he was allowed to banish her. In the end, he was still the child of the king.

*Speaking of which, there was a rumor that father had pulled strings behind the death of the previous saint... I wonder what that was about...*

Well, it had nothing to do with him. There was no reason to give a damn.

However, at the exchange between Claude and the king, Baldur laughed.

“What a stupid parent and child.”

Baldur continued.

“As I said earlier, her power is real. By banishing her, you aided our invasion.”

“W, what are you talking about—”

“—The best example is how even the dragon abandoned this kingdom after the saint’s deportation. You are all so pathetic, I could cry. However, I’m also grateful for your stupidity.”

The king couldn’t refute Baldur’s words.

With that said, Baldur instantly appeared before the king.

The movement was so fast, the knights around them failed to respond.

“From now on, you’ll listen to my *orders*. This was never a negotiation to begin with.”

Baldur lifted the king’s chin with his claws and continued.

“First, surrender this kingdom to the demons.”

“What are you saying!? As if I’d do that!?”

“Then, I’ll just kill every single person in this kingdom. If possible, I’d like to spare them, but it is how it is.”

“...Kuh!”

The king's face distorted.

Baldur was serious. The moment the king disagreed, he'd massacre the entire kingdom.

*Who gives a damn about those people? But what will happen to us once that happens? There's no guarantee we'll be spared...*

Claude was in a dilemma.

"Alright... let's go with that for now."

"For now"? I said this is an order, not a negotiation. All that's left for you to do is nod!"

Baldur raised the corners of his mouth as he released the king's chin.

"From now on, this kingdom is under our control. You will listen to me."

"W, what are you thinking about...? What is your goal?"

The king asked Baldur.

"Don't you think my kingdom is a bit small? Therefore, I want a large garden!"

Baldur began to gracefully circle in place.

"Why does an excellent race like mine has to suffer such a dilemma? I've always wondered about that. Hence, what we want is..."

"What do you want?"

Baldur turned to the king and said with a big, evil, smile.

"...To become the conqueror of this world."

"Wha...!? As if you can do that! On this continent, no, the number of people in this world is countless!? No matter how much you guys are \_\_\_"

"Indeed. As of present, it is a *little* farfetched. We're still not strong enough. That's why, we will instead do it little by little. So to speak, you're the first. Therefore, rejoice."

*...the conqueror of the world?*

Did Baldur just say that?

Besides, the world wasn't only filled with humans. There were also other races, which were rarely seen in public—such as dragons and spirits.

It should be impossible for the demons to conquer them all at once.

“I was quietly enduring it, but I’ve reached my limit. It may be small, but as long as I take action, some will surely follow.

Us conquering this kingdom shall be the trigger.”

Baldur slowly walked around the place like a stage actor.

“Now, I wonder whom I should conquer next.”

Seeing that smile, Claude felt that his spine had frozen.

# Chapter 69

## A Sharp Maid

“Good morning, Eliane. I shall help you change your clothes.”

“Yes, thank you.”

Morning.

Abby brought me the clothes I was going to wear today.

I had her doll me up.

I kept refusing her service, however—

“—No, this is my duty. Please do not worry.” Was her answer every time.

Abby was persistent. Recently, I just let her do what she wanted.

Even so, sometimes I changed my clothes before Abby arrived. Each time, she made an ambiguous expression. *“It can’t be helped, it seems.”*

We may be of the same sex, but I felt bad having her help me change clothes.

“Haa...”

“What’s wrong, Eliane?”

Abby tilted her head.

*I can’t, I can’t...*

I seemed to have let out a sigh.

“...Abby, do you have someone you like?”

“M, me?”

Abby’s tone went up a little.

Seeing Abby get worked up was a bit rare. It was a little cute.

“There isn’t. Occasionally, my parents will introduce me to a man. However, none of them struck my fancy. Not to mention, everyone says terrible things!”

“...Terrible things?”

“Yes, they keep telling me to stop working as a maid once we’re engaged. I don’t like that.”

*No... I think that’s only normal...*

I had never heard of someone continuing to work as a maid after getting married.

By the way, Abby was actually the daughter of a baron.

To begin with, the maids of the royal palace often had noble backgrounds.

Working as a maid was part of their bride training. If they were lucky, they might even be able to get closer with the royal family.

“Why would you remain as a maid? Don’t you want to settle down soon?”

“What are you talking about! If I quit being a maid, there’d be no one to take care of Nigel and you!”

Abby stopped what she was doing and vigorously exclaimed.

“I want to take care of you two forever! I won’t quit even if I’m told to quit!”

“I’m not telling you to quit...”

However, the fact that Abby was so adamant about being a maid also meant that she cared a lot about Nigel—

—...or, *me?*

It would be nice if I was included in that, too.

“Eliane, why did you suddenly ask me such a question?”

Abby asked back.

“There’s no reason, I’m just a little concerned...”

“... *Fufu*.”

Did she think I was behaving oddly?

Abby grinned.

“Did something happen between you and Nigel?”

...!!

“T-that’s...”

“What are you embarrassed about? It’s not strange to argue with your fiancé. Overcoming hardships is the key to becoming a true couple.”

Even if I tried to deny it, I couldn’t utter a single word because Abby was too on-point.

I had already told Abby that I was engaged to Nigel.

Although only a few people knew of that fact, it was within Nigel’s and my judgment that Abby should know.

It seemed that Abby had been taking care of Nigel ever since he was small. He didn’t want to hide such a thing from her.

“Ah, that’s right.”

After changing my clothes, Abby clapped her hands.

“I’m going to head to Nigel’s place after this. Come with me, Eliane. Won’t you talk to your fiancé?”

“N, no, I will only get in the way...”

“It’s alright!”

Even when I refused, Abby forcibly pulled my hand.

E, eh!?

Because of yesterday, I still felt awkward!

Despite that, Abby still pulled me to Nigel’s place.

We went to Nigel's room.

I wondered about what to talk about. Fortunately, I didn't encounter any problems.

"A lord is coming?"

I instinctively listened to focused on his words.

"Indeed. I really want Eliane to meet him."

"It's okay, but it's also too sudden..."

"Oh, I haven't mentioned him before?"

"You haven't!!"

"I see."

Nigel laughed happily.

When I entered in his room with Abby, he remarked. "What good timing!"

Probably—no, precisely because of that, I didn't need to talk about the main subject. I was relieved.

I thought that he was about to bring up something important.

"Who is this person?"

"His name is Vincent. He is a duke. In terms of location, a new dungeon has recently manifested, hasn't it? He lives around that area."

A new dungeon in the territory of Lynchgiham. There were many undead. It was a place adventurers would raid.

"Why so suddenly?"

"He wants to thank you for producing the holy water. Thanks to Eliane's creation, the dungeon capture has been proceeding smoothly. There are also many other things, but I won't list them. If I do, we'll run out of time."

"I see..."



*Duke Vincent, was it...?*

It wasn't uncommon for a lord to visit the royal palace. That kind of thing had occurred several times before.

But why would Nigel try to get me to meet Vincent at a time like this?

"Duke Vincent has been Nigel's classmate since their school days."

Abby chimed in, perhaps picking up on my confusion.

"He's a good person. There's no need for you to be anxious."

"Since Nigel's school days? So, he is basically the same age as Nigel?"

"That's right."

I asked a question,

"He's already a lord even though he's so young?"

To which Nigel replied,

"Yes. Vincent lost his father when he was young. Of course, he has the assistance of ministers and aides, but he has a very good territory. He is a competent man."

"I'm really looking forward to meeting him. So, when will I be meeting Vincent?"

"Today."

"— *Today!?*"

"Yes. Any problem?"

"It's too sudden!"

When I stared at Nigel's face, he chuckled.

Did he purposefully want to surprise me?

*Your Highness Nigel, you should cease your mischief!*

...back to the present.

"I'm at loss for what to say. I have to act proper."

“I think it’s alright. You don’t need to go out of your way. Vincent is a man who doesn’t care about etiquette. I think Eliane should just behave like she usually does.”

*That’s not the case, though...*

I was still anxious.

However, he was a very kind person? When I heard that, I felt like I needn’t worry so much.

But I had seen it.

Abby had an uneasy face.

“What’s wrong, Abby? Are you worried about something?”

“No, I don’t think you should be concerned. But it’s important to remember...”

“...What is it?”

“Vincent is a very good person, indeed. I have met him and I’m sure of that. But...”

When I heard Abby’s story, a chill went down my spine.

# Chapter 70

## The Duke of Ice

The moment Duke Vincent arrived, we decided to welcome him in the throne room.

“What’s wrong, Eliane? Your expression is gloomy.”

Douglas, who stood beside me, beckoned to me out of concern.

Apparently, Douglas was also going to join in on welcoming Vincent.

“Is it obvious?”

“Yes, a gloomy expression doesn’t suit you. Laugh.”

“I wish I could, but it’s hard, you see...”

We were about to welcome Vincent. I was confused after suddenly being told of his visit. As usual, Nigel’s explanation was brief. I wasn’t going to complain about that anymore—

*—Actually, I’d like to, just a little.*

The problem lied in Vincent’s personality, which I had heard about from Abby.

“Does Douglas know what Vincent is infamous for?”

“Obviously not. Because he’s a duke, he should be a great guy, right? Yet I am a dragon, it matters not to me.”

“Well, you’re right...”

He was unfazed as always. I was jealous of Douglas’ attitude.

“It seems that Vincent is infamous for being the ‘Duke of Ice’...”

“Hoo?”

Curious, Douglas raised his eyebrows.

Duke Vincent.

He had been Nigel's classmate since their school days and had become the lord of a territory at a young age.

He lived near the new dungeon that manifested the other day and also the spirit village.

"He's ruthless? What's the proof of that?"

"According to Abby, he purged all the ministers who rebelled against him without hesitation."

"Hoo, interesting."

"It isn't! If you were to purge people merely because they disagreed with you, that would be plain merciless..."

"Judging from a different perspective, it would not be wrong to call that a, 'dictatorship'."

"Right?"

Although there were various theories regarding what happened to the purged ministers, there were rumors that Vincent sentenced their families to death.

Of course, those were merely rumors. I didn't know whether or not they were true.

However, there was a common understanding among the people who heard such rumors—

—that Vincent wasn't one to hesitate over making ruthless decisions.

Either way, a scary person.

"Hmm..."

"The Duke of Ice, was it? Well, I think we're going to get along. I agree with his actions. I don't know much about rebels, but all enemies should be annihilated. If it were me, I'd cut them into eight pieces..."

Douglas was being noisy. I was still terrified.

Would I be able to converse with such a scary person?

If I behaved improperly, I might get cut down!

No... Nigel was present, and I didn't think things would get that extreme...

However, when I thought about Vincent, my stomach ached.

"Oh, Vincent has arrived."

Someone announced such.

When I looked up, a group of five or six people was about to enter the throne room.

The person in the center had the most extravagant attire.

Was that person Vincent?

"...How beautiful." I involuntarily muttered that the moment I saw the man whom was supposed to be Vincent.

He had long eyelashes.

His hair and skin were pure white, giving a cold impression.

He looked menacing.

When my gaze was involuntarily caught by him, suddenly, he looked towards me.

*Girori...*

That person's gaze was directed at me. My spine froze.

— *Why is he staring at me so much!?*

Eventually, the man turned away as he knelt before the throne where His Majesty the King and Nigel sat.

"It has been a long time, Your Majesty the King, Your Highness Nigel."

"Indeed, it has been a long time, Duke Vincent. No need to be so formal. Lift your face."

"Yes."

The man was instructed by the king to raise his face.

Apparently, I wasn't mistaken. That person was indeed Vincent.

“I’ve been informed of your recent feats. Even though you’re of such a young age, you’re managing your territory well.

You haven’t allowed any invasions from other kingdoms. You inherited your territory from your deceased predecessor and developed it to this extent. You deserve to be rewarded.”

“Thank you for your words.”

“Alright, then...”

The king and Vincent exchanged some words.

During that time, I wanted to immediately escape, but as if I could do that in the presence of His Majesty! I put up with it and stayed still.

Vincent’s back was towards me.

However, I had the illusion that he had eyes on the back of his head. I felt like he was paying attention to every single one of my actions.

Did I do something uncouth?

I was just standing there the whole time!!

I was honestly uncomfortable.

“Okay, let’s continue the rest of our talk with the minister tomorrow. Your trip must have been long. We’ve prepared a room. You should retire for today.”

“I understand.”

Vincent replied briefly.

“Your Majesty...”

“Right, Nigel. The two of you have been friends since your school days. There must be a lot for you to talk about. Enjoy your conversation together.”

“Thank you.”

Nigel and the king had such an exchange.

...I didn’t think that was the end of today.

I was scared, even though I didn't do anything...

However, because we were dismissed, I tried to escape to my room...

"Eliane."

"H, Hyiii!"

Nigel spoke to me from behind.

"I'm about to speak with Vincent, but I definitely want Eliane to join. Would that be alright?"

"I, it's alright with me, but won't I be a bother?"

"What are you talking about? Let's go."

*Douglas, help!*

*...hmm?*

When I tried to beckon to Douglas, whom was supposed to be standing next to me, he was gone.

H, he ran away!?

Speaking of which, I did hear him mutter, 'boring' amidst the previous exchange. Did he return to his room the instant the meeting between the king and Vincent ended!?

What a coward!!!

W, will I be safe?

But my worries were unfounded.

"Vincent, it's been a long time!"

As of the moment, Nigel was putting his arm around Vincent's shoulder. He talked like a good friend.

"Nigel, it's stuffy. You're still the same."

Vincent was frowning.

To the unexpected outcome, I was about to rapidly blink my eyes.

# Chapter 71

## Two Good Friends

Um... you both seem to get along very well?"

I was afraid to talk with Nigel and Vincent.

"Indeed. Vince is my best friend. Back in the academy, when the entire class went to capture a dungeon, I was in the same party as Vince."

"Stop bringing up such a foregone story."

Nigel was amiable, while Vincent had a bitter look.

The fact that Nigel referred to Vincent using a nickname proved that they were on good terms.

"I miss you. I remember back in the academy, we all reached the unexplored bottom floor of the dungeon thanks to Vince!"

"Hmph. If you had proceeded a little more carefully, the bottom floor could've been captured sooner. You're as ignorant as always."

"Hahaha, you're as blunt as always, Vince!"

The two were immersed in nostalgia.

"U, uh..."

I was left alone. I couldn't enter their conversation.

Is it really okay for me to be here!?

"Oh, right..."

Perhaps being considerate, Nigel released Vincent's shoulder as he turned towards me.

"Vince, let me introduce you. She's Eliane. There's no way you could've forgotten about her, after all, I keep mentioning her in our letters. However, this your first meeting, right?"

"...I see, she's the rumored one..."



Vincent turned his gaze towards me.

Uh...!

When he stared at me, I felt like I was suffocating. It was as if I was being glared at by a snake.

By the way, even though Vincent was a man, he was very beautiful.

The way he glared at me, it was as if I would be sucked into his gaze... he was such an enigma.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Vincent. I’ve heard about you from Nigel.”

“Nice to meet you...”

Vincent extended his hand, and I took it.

Honestly, I wanted to escape. But I couldn’t help but respond to his handshake.

“Why are you trembling?”

“I, no, I wasn’t—!?”

Because I was scared!

“*Fumu*, this white girl sure is funny, Nigel.”

“Do you like her?”

“Yes, she piqued my interest.”

Vincent released my hand.

*Fu, ha! Fu, ha!*

*Take a deep breath!*

*Eliane, calm down—!*

Even so, what did he mean by that!?

It was as if Vincent’s stare could pierce through my heart.

Honestly... I had a slightly unpleasant impression about him.

I must remain vigilant.

“Speaking of which, Nigel, do you know what happened to *that* kingdom?”

“I’m listening.”

He turned around.

Nigel and Vincent made a serious expression as they resumed their conversation.

“It seems that the rumors about the demon invasion were true. They invaded the royal capital.”

“I see. Indeed, there’s also been talk regarding the fall of the royal capital.”

“It’s unclear from the outside. Anyway, if the demons are serious, there’s no way they are being held within the royal capital.”

“It seems that no requests for rescue have been received by other kingdoms either—including Lynchgiham.”

“Perhaps, the demons had already captured the royal capital before they could dispatch any such requests. Well, I don’t think anyone would have helped that kingdom unless there was something in it for them, though.”

The royal capital—the kingdom’s central.

A city like that... was destroyed by demons?

No, I already knew that would happen.

Until now, I had been maintaining a barrier, and there was also Douglas nearby. Hence the demons didn’t attack. But once we disappeared, there was nothing to stop them.

...I had nothing to do with them anymore.

But I wondered why.

There was a gnawing sensation in my chest.

“For now, it’s only the royal capital, but the attack can spread here. We need to raise our guard.”

“I agree.”

“To do so, we should focus our budget on military development. This kingdom invests too little on its military considering its size.”

“Well, I’m aware of that... in fact, that’s what I’m about to discuss.”

Vincent nodded.

“Eliane.”

“Yes, I understand. I will leave the two of you be.”

An important discussion was going to unfold. I shouldn’t there for I’d only hinder the conversation.

...That wasn’t the biggest reason, by the way.

I could finally escape from that place! Being in the same room as Vincent was both suffocating and unbearable! Inwardly, I was delighted.

“Excuse me.”

I left with a slight sullenness that I couldn’t comprehend.

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That night.

“Nigel, have you finished your conversation?”

I had an exchange with Nigel.

“Yes. It got heated. After all, it’s been so long.”

He smiled bitterly.

Vincent had left.

However, I had to remain alert. It seemed that he was relaxing in one of the castle’s chambers.

“That... Lord Vincent, is somehow scary?”

I wanted to frankly tell him, “*I’m not good with him.*” But such wasn’t the case.

“Haha. He may come off like that. However, underneath it, he’s a

good person.”

“But, isn’t he called the, ‘Duke of Ice’? That doesn’t sound good...”

“Well, that’s what others say. Besides, isn’t ice cool?”

Nigel laughed amusingly. Perhaps he was joking.

I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to laugh.

He had an untouchable aura. His personality was also ruthless.

For that reason, he was granted the title, ‘ice’—was my guess.

“Well, you don’t have to worry so much. I understand what you’re getting at, Eliane.”

Nigel lightly tapped my shoulder.

Even though Nigel said that, I just couldn’t agree...

Well, it wasn’t like I’d talk to him often. I had no need to worry.

That was right. Despite my worries, he wouldn’t be in my life forever. I should relax.

At that time, I still didn’t know yet—

—the reason he was nicknamed the, ‘Duke of Ice’.

# Chapter 72

## The Value of my Existence

The next morning.

“I think he’s in the castle. It’s kind of uncomfortable...”

I was walking down the corridor leading to the courtyard to feed Ralph.

Of course, I was referring to Duke Vincent.

The Duke of Ice.

He and Nigel were classmates back in their school days. He also seemed to be a very competent lord.

Nigel and Abby both said he was a good person, but I was vigilant.

“Am I overthinking this?”

“What are you muttering about?”

“—!?”

I was called out to from behind.

When I turned around—

“—L, Lord Vincent!?”

“Why are you so surprised?”

I saw Vincent’s face.

When he saw me, he didn’t even smile.

D-did he hear what I just said!?

When I felt my heartbeat quicken...

“I have something to ask of you today.”

Vincent approached me.

“You seem to be Nigel’s fiancée.”

“...!”

I failed to comprehend his question.

Why did he know that?!

From Nigel, I guess. But Nigel had insisted I refrain from easily mentioning such important information...

However, I was currently in the presence of the Duke of Ice!

I didn’t know what to say!

“A, are you dissatisfied with something?”

I finally opened my mouth.

Vincent scoffed.

“Nothing. It’s just that he has never been interested in women. Back in the academy, he was surrounded by ladies, but he turned everyone down. What kind of woman did he make his fiancée? I’m just curious.”

He gradually narrowed the distance between us.

If Nigel had told him this, I could ease my worries.

But why would he bother to ask such a thing when we were alone?

While I was confused, Vincent asked casually.

“Are you worthy of being Nigel’s fiancée?”

“Huh?”

Upon suddenly being told such a thing, I could only listen.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean anything bad. I heard about you from Nigel. It seems that you’ve worked as a healer until now.

Which means, you aren’t an aristocrat.”

—He said sorry.

Even so, I didn’t think Vincent was the slightest bit remorseful.

“I, is being part of the aristocracy the minimal requirement to be Nigel’s fiancée?”

“I didn’t say that, either. However, no matter how good of a healer you are, other people might wonder if your knowledge, wisdom, and benevolence match that of Nigel’s.”

He was being roundabout.

However, what Vincent meant to say had been painfully conveyed to me.

...He was saying I was unworthy of being Nigel’s fiancée...

Certainly, I might be naïve.

I wasn’t an aristocrat, but Nigel still made me his fiancée... it might look strange to the people around me.

However, my feelings for Nigel were genuine. Even so, there was no reason for me to say that.

Was it because I was overwhelmed by my feelings?

Before I realized it, I was glaring at Vincent.

He remarked, “Hoo... aren’t you a pretty strong woman. I don’t hate that kind of woman.”

Vincent further closed the distance between us.

I kept retreating—however, my back hit the wall.

Vincent trapped with the wall. His arms were at both of my sides, preventing me from escaping.

“I will praise that courage. But you’re a woman, still. If you’re too careless, you’ll be eaten by a bad guy.”

Vincent’s beautiful face was right before me.

His skin was morbidly white. I got chills from his stare.

I wish I could push his body away and escape. ...But it was as if my body had been frozen solid.

*... I’ll be eaten by a bad guy?*

What on earth was that man going to do?

“W, won’t you move aside? Doing this to a woman isn’t very praiseworthy.”

“Kukuku, you’re still strong. I’m liking you more and more.”

*I don’t want to be liked by you!*

Vincent grinned.

I felt like I was being stared at by a snake.

When I was nervous...

“Oi, what are you guys doing?”

Vincent and I turned towards the voice.

“D, Douglas!”

“I was wondering how long you’d take to come to the courtyard, so I came to fetch you. Are you guys in the middle of something?”

When I saw Douglas, it was as if my body had finally been freed from an enchantment. I could move again.

I bent over, left Vincent, and ran to Douglas.

“We aren’t! Don’t say things that can easily be misunderstood!”

“Oh, that’s right, you have Nigel, after all.”

Douglas grinned.

Although he was always causing trouble, he was somehow more dependable that day.

“Hmm... red hair, dark skin. Could you be the man Nigel mentioned?”

Vincent wasn’t deterred and looked at Douglas with interest.

“Well, this is all for today.”

Vincent turned around.

“But don’t forget this—what it means for a naïve girl like you to stand beside Nigel. Although the outcome might have been different if



everyone were to know your true worth.”

Finally, Vincent left us for good.

The moment he disappeared, my shoulders sunk.

“Phew... Douglas, thank you.”

“I don’t know why you’re grateful, but you’re welcome.”

Douglas was nonchalant.

“That guy was the aforementioned Duke of Ice. Although he’s handsome, he carries an aura different from Nigel’s.

Anyway, what the heck is—”

“—Please listen!”

He gently rubbed my back.

“It looked like things were starting to get difficult. Talking to that overbearing man must have strained you. I understand your feelings well.”

“I, isn’t he!? That person is really terrible...!”

“But, why is he terrible, though? It seems to me that he’s merely worried about Eliane.”

“W, worried!? Why and how did you come to such a conclusion!?”

“He’s pretty aggressive for a human, but if he were a dragon, instead...”

Suddenly, Douglas mentioned something about, ‘dragon’—which shouldn’t matter.

I wondered if Vincent hated me?

He said that I was unworthy, naïve, and didn’t suit Nigel...

He told me a lot of things...

What should I do to be recognized by such a person?

It wasn’t like I could just confess that I was a former saint... what should I do?

“What’s wrong, Eliane? You look unhappy.”

“I don’t know anymore!”

I was angry and turned away from Douglas.

Maybe, it wasn’t Vincent’s words.

Maybe the reason his words had pierced me this painfully was because deep down, I was also concerned about my relationship with Nigel.

# Chapter 73

## The Pharmacist's Qualification

I couldn't waste time thinking about Vincent, therefore I went to the magic research institute to help make holy water.

"Haa..."

"What's wrong, Eliane? You look gloomy."

Robert was concerned about me.

I seemed to have let out a sigh without realizing it.

"No, it's just that something is on my mind... I don't know how to tell Robert about it..."

"That's right. You can tell me if you like. Don't hesitate to confide in me."

With that said, Robert continued making holy water.

I exuded the atmosphere of not wanting to talk. Therefore, he didn't ask too much. As expected of Robert.

"Besides, I have been busy lately..."

"I'm sorry about that. All I have done is make super-class potions and holy water..."

"No, no, what are you talking about? I'm talking about my business as a researcher. I just wish we could have another one of you."

Robert said with a bitter smile.

Another me...

If so!

"Ei!"

When I held my hand in front of me and casted magic, a white smoke appeared.

As soon as the smoke had disappeared...

"T, that's, Lady Eliane?"

Robert seemed to be confused.

Indeed. My double had just appeared.

However.

"It's but a doll made of magical power. I can control it a little, but calling it 'another me' is still unreasonable."

I manipulated the doll that looked a lot like me with magic...

My doll raised her right hand. She also tried to smile.

However, that was the extent.

"You can also do something like this? Is this also the feat of a healer?"

"Y, yes, it is."

Robert glared at me skeptically.

Hmmm... recently, I felt that Robert had somehow understood I wasn't a healer.

But, as the kind man that he was, he didn't pursue the matter.

"Even so, the doll looks so much like you, Eliane. Even when I look closely, I can't tell you apart."

"No matter how much of a doll it is, it's still embarrassing to be seen up close."

"Forgive my uncouthness."

Robert stopped looking at my doll.

Because he said he wanted 'another me', I created that doll as a joke. Still his interest seemed to be piqued.

By the way, that doll would continue to exist until I erased her, even if there was some distance between us.

It would last for half a day. However, since it couldn't be moved easily, it could only be used as a joke item like that.

“I’m sorry, let’s continue making holy water.”

I made the doll disappear.

The white smoke rose again, and by the time it had disappeared, so had the doll.

“Eliane seems to be able to do anything. You also seem to have become accustomed to making potions and holy water.”

“Is that so?”

I felt happy when Robert praised me.

My speed at making the potions and holy water was improving. The magic required to make them had also been reduced.

At that rate, I was sure I could continue making them without overworking myself.

... *Honestly!*

Even though I was doing such a fine job as a pharmacist(?), Vincent still said such a thing about me!

No, I couldn’t deny my naivety. Having been locked away inside the kingdom for so long, I didn’t know much about the outside world.

“Huh?”

I kept making potions to unleash my frustration at Vincent.

That was when I noticed a piece of paper that had been randomly placed inside the laboratory.

“A pharmacist qualification test...?”

“Eliane, are you interested in the pharmacist qualification?”

Robert looked at it.

“What’s this?”

“Originally, being a pharmacist requires a qualification. At the same time, it also isn’t a job that can be done without a qualification.”

“A qualification...”

I longed to become a pharmacist, but I didn't know there was such a thing.

I only read about pharmacists in the book. The characters in the book didn't have any qualifications, but, ...well, that was fiction.

"If I have this qualification, then surely I'll be more motivated... currently, I'm making potions and holy water, but I still crave more knowledge..."

"I think being able to make super class potions and holy water are already the cornerstones, but... indeed, not everything can be learned through textbooks."

That was it!

"If I do this, maybe I can change his mind?"

Vincent said I was unworthy of being Nigel's fiancée.

For everyone to acknowledge me, I needed to do something different.

I didn't know if that meant acquiring the pharmacist qualification—but I was sure it'd count.

Having a visible and easy-to-understand qualification might make me more confident in myself.

"Robert, I want to acquire the pharmacist qualification."

"L, Lady Eliane?"

Robert's gaze turned strange.

"Is it weird?"

"No, even if you don't have that a qualification, I think you're one of the best in this kingdom... no, I think you have the skill necessary to compete with the best of the world... as such, I don't think you require such a qualification. Besides, why, now?"

"Ara, I mustn't be overconfident in my own power. Besides, I'm sure lack knowledge as a pharmacist."

"Well, Eliane having that sort of motivation is good, but will you be alright? The exam is in three days."

...In *three days!*

It was unexpectedly close, I grew afraid.

However.

“N, no problem. I’m sure I’ll pass it.”

“Well, if it’s Eliane, then she’ll surely pass. The exam acceptance period has already passed, but if I vouch for you, then you’ll surely be allowed to take it alone. I’ll be sure to inform them.”

“Thank you.”

...Well, I thought my practical skill was fine, but the problem lied on the written test.

As soon as potion making was over, I had to return to the castle and study for the exam.

Although only a short period of time had passed, I had become even busier.

Well, I was originally longing for the qualification, anyway. It was be a good opportunity.

“I shall overthrow the, ‘Duke of Ice!’”

“Overthrow...? What happened to you?”

Robert asked, but at that point my head only contained the qualification.

# Chapter 74

## A Small Amulet

To acquire qualification as a pharmacist...!

I withdrew to the royal castle library and decided to study there alone for a while.

...or that was how it was supposed to be.

“Big sis, do your best! Do your best, big sis!”

While I was reading a book with bloody red eyes, beside me was the first princess of the kingdom—Cecile, Nigel’s younger sister, cheering for me.

“Thank you, Cecily...”

“Yes! No problem! Big sis, who is doing her best, is very cool! Fight! Fight!”

Were the small flags that Cecily held handmade?

They suited her. She was very cute.

“It’s been a long time since I last studied hard like this, I feel tired.”

I stretched my back and rotated my shoulders.

When was the last time I had studied so hard? Right—it was when I had been appointed as the saint of the kingdom.

That was a difficult time.

Prince Claude forced me to study etiquette, “*You’re very lacking in manners!*” I had grown up as a commoner.

That wasn’t the extent of it.

I was made to study healing magic, barrier magic, and folklore of the kingdom, I was unable to sleep peacefully for a while.

However, this time, I was studying of my own initiative. Moreover, it was in a field of my own interest. It was fun.



“Will Cecily not be enrolling in the academy, soon? Once Cecily enters the academy, Cecily will also study a lot.”

“Cecily hates studying! I’ll just study through big sis!” Cecily spoke to me with a smile.

“That’s not how it works...”

I had also reported to Nigel regarding the qualification.

He could only ask, “*Why so sudden...?*” But I couldn’t tell him the real reason.

“Okay, I’m almost finished with the third chapter.”

“When you’re done, play with Cecily!”

“No, I can’t. I still have a lot of work to do. Playing with Cecily will have to wait until the exam is over.”

“*Muuu...!*”

Cecily puffed her cheeks.

Whenever I looked at her face, I regained some energy.

There was less than three days until the exam.

I had no time to rest!

...

*Hm?*

“Uh-oh, I fell asleep without realizing it.”

I opened my eyes.

The sky outside of the window had already turned completely dark. The table’s tabletop lights were illuminating my hands.

I didn’t mean to fall asleep. But, before I knew it, I had fallen flat on the table.

“I can’t fail the exam. I have to do my best. Let’s continue studying...”

I tried to look at the book. My head was still drowsy.

That was when I noticed it.

“...A blanket?”

A blanket hung from my shoulders.

Furthermore, a letter had been placed on the table.

*‘To Eliane.*

*Overworking yourself isn’t good. A lady shouldn’t go out of her way to ruin her body like that.*

*However, Eliane, who is doing her best, is also beautiful. If you require anything, you only need to ask.*

*From Nigel.’*

It was a letter from Nigel.

“Nigel seems to be concerned about me.”

I picked up the blanket and buried myself in it.

The blanket was fluffy—it was as if Nigel was nearby.

I felt at ease.

I thought I had only slept a little, but the tiredness of studying had been blown away.

“Did he not call out because I was asleep? In order to respond to Nigel’s kindness, I absolutely have to pass the exam.”

Alright!

Energy restored!

I smacked both of my cheeks and tried to face the book.

However, at that time, I discovered that he had left more than a letter.

“This is... a charm?”

When I picked it up, I saw what seemed to be a necklace.

The surroundings were too dark, which was why I didn’t notice it earlier.

The necklace-like talisman had a jade crystal attached. When I squinted to see what was at the back of the crystal, I found a small piece of paper in which '*Prayer for Passing*' was written.

By the way, it was a 'passing prayer'. There were many other charms—such as for 'easy delivery', and 'reciprocated love.'

"Nigel even went so far as to do this for me...?"

I hung the talisman around my neck.

I felt more energetic when I wore it.

When I imagined him draping the blanket over me, before leaving this letter and amulet, I naturally smiled.

"It seems that I will have to thank Nigel again."

But as of the moment, I need to concentrate!

I rolled up my sleeves and resumed studying.

# Chapter 75

## The Written Test

Thus came the day of the exam.

“Eliane, you don’t have to be nervous. With your talent, I’m sure you’ll pass.”

“That’s right, after all, big sis studied hard!”

When I was about to leave for the exam, Nigel and Cecily wholeheartedly encouraged me.

“Thank you... I won’t hold back!”

“That’s the spirit!”

Besides, I had the charm for passing given to me by Nigel.

I still wore it around my neck. Just by doing that, I already felt powerful.

“Oh, right. Eliane, about that talisman—”

“Oh no! At this rate, I’m going to be late! See you!”

At the end, Nigel tried to say something, but I had already scrambled out of the royal palace.

*I will definitely pass!*

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Upon arriving at the exam site, I showed my admission ticket and then entered the building.

It seemed that due to Robert, I was able to take the exam. For him, I absolutely had to pass!

By the way, I also wanted to hear Robert’s encouragement. However, he seemed occupied with work and thus couldn’t come out.

Robert seemed to have decided that I’d pass. However, to me, the

exam was a great enemy that could sweep me by my feet if I let my guard down.

The pharmacist qualification exam was divided into two parts.

One was a written test, while the other was a practical test.

As Robert had said, I wasn't worried about the practical test, but... the problem was the written test.

Although it was only for three days, I should be alright, right? I had studied for the exam, after all.

In the past, I had also taken tests. At those times, I had reached passing scores.

However, I wasn't certain I wouldn't get swallowed up by the atmosphere.

I'll relax and take the exam properly!

I moved according to the guidance inside the venue. Eventually, I reached a place which resembled a large auditorium.

I'd be doing the written test first.

Soon after I sat down, a person who looked like an examiner came over...

"Then, I will start the written test immediately. Please do your best and don't be nervous. Alright... start!"

The test started.

I looked at the question paper.

*Alright...!*

If all the questions were like this one, I'd be able to finish up without any problems!

Nothing in particular made me stumble—I was able to solve the problem smoothly.

However, as I proceeded further along with the problems, the difficulty level steadily increased.

*But, if it's only this—!*

After there were only 20 minutes left to the exam, I had arrived at the final question.

I stopped.

*This is...*

I could solve that problem just fine—but wouldn't it be too difficult for other students?

Making something like that the final problem...

But, regardless of practical skill, if someone was unable to solve that problem, they might be judged unfit to become a pharmacist...

*Mumumu...*

That year's pharmacist exam was difficult...

Although I was a little confused, I still wrote down the answer.

...With that, I was finished!

But... what was with that final problem?

I felt like there was an underlying reason behind that final problem... Besides, there was no correct answer to it.

Because of that, I wrote a bit of my own theory. Even if I didn't get that problem right, I shouldn't need to worry because I'd still receive a passing score.

Even so... for future pharmacists to have to solve such a difficult problem...

I thought I had mastered pharmacy, but it seemed that I still had room for improvement.

The essence of a pharmacist was deep.

*Anyway, let's review the answer!*

I used the remaining time to the fullest and reviewed my exam from the very first question.

□ POV: The Examiner

The written test was over.

The examiners gathered in a sperate room and read the collected answer sheets.

“This time, we went all out.”

“It wouldn’t be strange for the highest score to be the average score.”

While scoring, the examiners were enthusiastic.

However.

“I don’t think there’s a perfect score.”

“That’s unfortunate for the students. After all, the final question of this written test was made by Mr. Bart, a leading pharmacy expert.”

The attention shifted towards an elderly man who sat on the innermost seat.

The man—Bart, put his elbows on the table and casually glanced down at the answer sheets.

*Kukuku... Am I too mean? Aspiring pharmacists—no, even veteran pharmacist wouldn’t be able to solve that problem!*

As the other examiners had said, Bart was the number one or the second-best pharmacologist in the world.

He was residing in Lynchgiham for the time being, but until recently, he had been studying medicine in other countries.

As such, he hadn’t returned for a long while.

For the first time in thirty years, he was requested to make an exam question.

He also supervised the entire exam, but more importantly, he created the final problem.

Bart did it himself without any help from the others.

He was told that there was a great pharmacist in the mix. Basically, Bart had been requested to create such a question.

Hearing that request, the pharmacologist soul of Bart was ignited.

*A great pharmacist? Moreover, one without a qualification. I see, a pharmacist who is great in the field. Even so, no matter how good a pharmacist is, if he lacks knowledge, he'll fall into a slum, someday. I have to nail it in!*

Bart felt it was time for him to play his part.

“So... what’s the name of that stray pharmacist?”

When Bart asked a question.

“...I think she’s called ‘Eliane’, this is her answer sheet.”

“I see.”

Bart immediately looked at Eliane’s answer sheet.

*Hmm... as expected, all the questions except for the final one are correct. Well, if she’s truly a great pharmacist, she should be able to do that much.*

Nevertheless, the answer she came up with for the final problem was exceptional.

The final problem regarded the theory of liquids, which Bart had spent thirty years perfecting as he traveled around various countries.

That theory was a long-cherished dream of both pharmacists and pharmacologists.

Basics, applications, etc—a wide range of knowledge was required. Unless she had read the latest theory, she shouldn’t be able to solve it.

Moreover, the theory hadn’t even been completed.

Indeed. Bart had inserted a problem with a vague answer.

“Well, what kind of strange answer did she write...?”

However, the moment he saw Eliane’s answer, Bart stood up on spot.

“What the hell is this!?”

“Ah, uh... Mr. Bart? What happened? Did Eliane answer wrong?”

“It’s the opposite! Her answer is too wonderful!”



It was a perfect, correct, answer.

No, that wasn't all.

Eliane's answer seemed to have her own theory mixed in.

*What insight! With this, won't my research progress dramatically!?*

Bart's hand, which was holding the answer sheet, was trembling.

*"By the way, what is Mr. Bart researching?"*

Other examiners were speaking quietly.

*"Certainly, he's trying to make 'holy water'..."*

*"Holy water? Ah, surely, Eliane is that pharmacist who concocted holy water herself, right?"*

*"Don't say stupid things, that must be a rumor. It was the effort of everyone working at the research institute of magic!"*

*"Well, that's only right, as if you can concoct holy water by yourself, anyway..."*

In the room, Bart's excited voice echoed. "As long as I have this, I can complete holy water!"

# Chapter 76

## I made Holy Water during the Practical Test

The written test was over. I moved to the practical test.

The practical test had us entering a laboratory a few at a time. Each group would then make potions or some other kind of medicine.

“The practical test sounds easier.”

I entered the laboratory in a group of ten.

It was narrower than the magic research institute’s, the equipment was also lacking... but it should suffice.

I felt that I should be able to do better in the practical test, something I was more familiar with. Being careless was one’s greatest enemy, though.

As I was about to start making medicine...

“What do I make...”

I heard the anxious voice of a girl. She belonged to my exam group.

“What’s wrong?”

Before I noticed it, I had called out to that girl.

“This year’s written test was difficult... I have to make it up through this practical test... I, can I really pass?”

“Oh, are you worried about that?”

“Eh?”

“If you do your best, the result will come naturally. If you’re nervous, you won’t be able to do your best.”

“You seem to be calm...”

Me?

It might have looked like that, but I was nervous, too.

However, now that I was there, I couldn't go back.

I should have studied more... I kept regretting, thinking it was too late.

"Well, even if I told you not to be nervous, you won't just relax that easily..."

Wasn't there be a good way?

Oh, that was right!

"How about writing '*people*' on your palm and swallowing it three times?"

"Can it fend off my nervousness?"

"Yes, I think it would. I'm not lying. Here, let me do the same."

Feeling half-confident, the girl wrote 'people' on her palm and brought it to her mouth.

It was some kind of charm.

By writing 'people' and swallowing it, the word would empower you and give you an edge over the people around you.

By telling myself that I should keep calm, I could really relax...

...I heard that it had such an effect.

You'd be saved by what you believed.

...Suddenly being told such a thing, the once anxious girl smiled.

"Thank you! My nervousness has subsided!"

"Right?"

"You should do your best, too! Let's pass together!"

"Yes, of course."

With that said, the girl started making her own medicine.

The girl was also my rival in the so-called qualification test.

However, the test didn't have a relative evaluation. Even if a score was lower than another's, as long as it exceeded a certain level, it

should be fine. Even if it wasn't, that didn't mean you'd instantly be eliminated.

I couldn't let anyone best me.

But at the very least, I also wanted them to pass.

"Now, let's get started!"

I clapped my cheeks, regaining my spirit.

By the way, for that test, only one potion ingredient was allowed to be brought in.

The setup was in my favor.

Of course, what I brought in was...

"Spirit water! Shall I use this to make holy water?"

I placed the bottled spirit water on the desk.

Hmm, if I thought about it, holy water might be overkill for the qualification test. Despite that, I couldn't cut corners—

that was what I was best at! Or so I was told...

*Let's make excellent holy water and surprise the examiners!*

Using the spirit water, I immediately started making holy water.

□ POV: Examiner

A student who perfectly described how to make holy water appeared in the written test.

It was a shock among the examiners, however, it was only a practical test.

*The girl named Eliane has a perfect score for the written test. Unless she badly messes up during the practical test, she should be able to pass... but what is she going to make?*

Bart waited for the practical test to finish in a separate room.

How many years had it been since he last felt that excited?

He used to admire unknown drugs and was devoted to research.

He was still devoted to the long-cherished desire of humankind, ‘*holy water*’, but recently he had fallen into a slump and his research hadn’t been progressing.

Perhaps, because of that, he had forgotten his excitement and continued his research with monotone feelings.

*But... why, when I saw Eliane’s description, I remembered my old passion for the first time in a long while... Kuku, thank you...*

What on earth would she make?

Her practical test should be over soon.

Bart was still waiting when—

“—Something has happened!”

One of the examiners jumped into the room.

“What happened? The practical test should be over...”

“Yes, it is. However, when I decided to collect the potions the examinees made...”

The moment he saw it, Bart doubted his eyes.

“This brilliance... someone submitted holy water—no way!”

“Yes, it’s a holy water! An examinee made holy water by herself!”

“What!? Alone!? Holy water!? Hey, could it be, the name of the examinee—”

“—I, it’s Eliane! That girl who got a perfect score in the written test!”

“How extraordinary is she!?”

He expected something amazing, but holy water was just...!

Seeing the holy water before him, Bart could only be dazed.

# Chapter 77

## The Result's Announcement

I successfully completed the test.

It seemed that scoring and paperwork would take a day. The successful applicants would be announced the next day.

I returned to the royal castle at once. I was both thrilled and excited for tomorrow's announcement.

On the day of the announcement...

I went to the previous day's exam site to see whether or not I had passed.

Or so I planned...

"Eh, isn't that His Highness Nigel?"

"Why is the prince in such a place!?"

"Also, the one beside him... could it be, Duke Vincent?"

"I heard he was in the kingdom, but why would they come see the results of the pharmacist's exam!?"

The surroundings were fixated on me—or to be more precise, *us*.

That was quite natural.

I said that I'd go alone, but Nigel and Vincent insisted upon following!

That morning...

"U, uh, Nigel... I'm fine by myself?"

"What are you saying? Eliane did her best. I'm interested in the result."

"O, okay..."

I had such an exchange with Nigel.

Apparently, he wanted to know my exam result. He wanted to see it

along with me.

Well, Nigel coming along was not a problem...

...The real problem was...

“U, uh, why is Vincent coming along?”

“*Kukuku*, those words make me feel lonely. I’ve finished my businesses in this city. Basically, I’m free. Seeking entertainment isn’t a crime.”

*You just want to see me dejected, don’t you!?*

*I’m sure you think I’m going to fail!*

Too bad, that wasn’t going to happen!

Because I was pretty confident in my result!

You’ll regret your words!

...Despite that, when I thought about it, I grew anxious. What if I did fail? I’d be ridiculed by Vincent...

I, I should be fine!?

“H, hey, the results are being posted!”

Someone uttered that.

When I turned around, some of the examiners I had met yesterday were in the middle of posting a large piece of paper on the bulletin board.

“Oh, it’s finally announced. Hmm...? Eliane, until a while ago, you look very confident. Why do you seem uneasy, all of the sudden?”

“T, that’s not true!”

“I, I see...”

Because I screamed, Nigel became a little meek.

If Vincent hadn’t accompanied us, I wouldn’t have been that nervous!

That person came along, and I lost my composure!

“My exam number is 65...”

The number of successful applicants would be written on the paper.

When I scanned the numbers from top to bottom—

“—There it is!”

I was able to find the number ‘65’ immediately.

“You did it! Well, I already knew you’d pass.”

Nigel also rejoiced.

*Phew...* I was glad I passed.

That was the first time I had experienced a test that could truly be called a test. My heart was about to burst with excitement.

...Thus,

“Lord Vincent!”

I immediately showed him the proof that I had passed.

“Well, now I’m qualified as a pharmacist. It may not mean much, but this proves that I can do something too, right?”

“...?”

Hearing to me, Vincent made a baffling expression.

Huh...?

His reaction was different from what I expected.

“What are you talking about? If it’s only this exam, then of course you’d pass.”

“What?”

Towards his unexpected reply, I leaked a strange voice.

“Even so, why did you suddenly decide to get a pharmacist qualification? Even if you don’t have that, you’re already good enough, aren’t you?”

“B, but you said, I’m unworthy of Nigel... hence why, I tried to get this qualification to prove that I am...”



Ah, I blurred it out.

For some reason, I felt that I was on the losing side.

For a moment, Vincent's eyes widened in astonishment.

"What a shock. So that was the reason? That's not what I mean."

"Eh, but at that time..."

"Vince."

While Vincent and I were talking, Nigel interjected from the side.

"What did you say to Eliane?"

"I didn't say anything to her in particular. Your fi... I was just trying to figure out what kind of woman she was."

He was about to say 'fiancée', however, there was no way he could say that in such a crowd.

"...You said something that was be misunderstood again."

"I just talked the way I usually do."

Vincent had a sullen expression.

Soon, he turned to me.

"I heard that the holy water was thanks to her in the first place. Thanks to that, I was saved. She also set up a barrier around the territory. I wasn't saying that you're incompetent."

"You aren't saying that I'm incompetent!? Well, that's a news for me!"

"Is that so?"

Vincent tilted his head.

*Ah! Enough already!*

No matter how close he was with Nigel, there was no reason to do such a thing!

But then, why did he say such that?

While I was confused, Vincent continued talking while stroking his

chin.

“But in the end, I saw something fulfilling. I feel satisfied—I should be returning to my territory, soon.”

“You’re going home?”

“Yes, I was just thinking of leaving this city for now.”

*For now—*

—hearing that from Vincent should have made me feel relieved, right?

But for some reason, my heart only grew agitated.

“I, is that how it is...”

“That’s right. I’m off to return to the castle and pack my bags. I’ll leave the two of you be. Have a nice chat.”

Vincent turned on his heels and left.

As I watched his back, Nigel put his hand on my back.

“Eliane, I’m sorry. I didn’t explain Vince’s personality to you. He’s not a bad person. It’s easy to misunderstand him due to how he speaks...”

“No, no, don’t worry, that’s not what I think at all...”

That said, Nigel was probably right. I didn’t fully understand Vincent.

“That’s right, there is something I need to say. That amulet was given  
—”

“Lady Eliane!”

While Nigel was trying to say something.

Examiners came to us all at once from the venue.

“You’re here! I have something to discuss!”

“With me?”

“Yes! Do you know Mr. Bart, the pharmacologist?”

“Well, that name was often mentioned in the book I read...”

He seemed to be a fairly famous pharmacologist.

“Your written test got a perfect score. During the practical test, you also made holy water! Mr. Bart wants to praise your achievements... and also want to hear about the holy water.”

“E, eh!?”

Such a famous person wanted to praise me... if he were lying, then I hoped he'd stop!

Because of my former kingdom, I still wasn't used to being praised!

Besides, it felt like I'd be having a *long* discussion. I felt slumped.

“Eliane, let's escape.”

Nigel took my hand.

“You don't like it, right? Let's return to the castle at once!”

“Y, yes. That's right.”

As expected of Nigel!

He knew me well!

Pulled by Nigel, I left the examiners.

“Wait, Eliane! His Highness Nigel, also! We just want to talk to her!”

The examiners were screaming. However, probably because Nigel was with me, they didn't dare give chase.

Forgive me!

Chapter 78

Do you Hate Vince?

“Eh? The one who gave me this amulet wasn't Nigel?”

Upon returning to the royal castle, I was told that shocking fact by Nigel.

“Yes.”

“Then, who...”

“It was Vince.”

Vince—Vincent.

I picked up the amulet around my neck and saw the ‘passing prayer’ in the crystal again.

“When I saw you exhausted and asleep in the library...”

While I was confused, Nigel continued to talk to me.

“I was going to wake you at first, but I couldn’t because of how deeply you were sleeping. Thus, I prepared a blanket.

When I was about to return to the library, Vince handed me that.”

“Why would Vincent do that?”

“Who knows. It might have been because he was in good mood. This is what Vince said back then: *‘Give this to that girl.*

*This amulet won’t make her pass the exam, but it should cheer her up.’* I asked him why, but he wouldn’t tell me.”

“He said such a thing...?”

After reading that letter, I had concluded that the amulet had been given to me by Nigel.

But who would’ve expected that Vincent...

“Hey, Eliane, do you hate Vince?”

“Eh?”

*I, hate Vincent?*

*How do I say this?*

I thought he was a cynical person. However, for some reason, I couldn’t hate him. He did intimidate me, though.

Did Nigel conclude something when he saw me freeze?

“As I said, he has always been misunderstood. At a glance, he has a rude personality. Because of that, he made a lot of enemies back in the academy. However...”

Nigel continued speaking with nostalgic feelings.

“He’s actually a gentle person. As a proof, slowly, all my friends began to like Vince. In the end, he made more friends than I did. Although, he was indeed ruthless to those he considered his enemy. But I don’t think he see you as such, Eliane.”

“He has a lot of friends? I’m sorry, but that’s hard to imagine.”

“That’s what everyone always says.”

Nigel chuckled.

I thought he was a sarcastic and vile person.

But what if I was judging the book by its cover?

Maybe Vincent meant to give me some advice. However, his bluntness caused the ‘advice’ to come out like that.

My aversion towards him was reversed.

“Nigel.”

The moment I said his name, did Nigel understand?

“Yes. Vince is about to leave the castle. If you wait too long, he might disappear.”

“Oh, thank you! I, I have something to say to him!”

I rushed to the gate without waiting for a reply from Nigel.

\*\*\*

“Lord Vincent!”

I found Vincent at the castle gate and instantly called his name.

He slowly turned towards me.

“What is it?”

Vincent stared at me.

His servant also looked at me dubiously.

I rushed there without realizing. Therefore, the moment I saw Vincent's face, I paled.

‘Duke of Ice.’

A person who had a ruthless personality and kept others at bay.

However.

“The amulet...! Thank you!”

I raised the amulet.

A person with a personality that cold wouldn't have given me such an amulet!

I mustered my courage and thanked him. Vincent looked surprised for a moment.

“...I see. You came all the way here to say that? Well, no problem. Was the amulet useful, even if just a bit?”

“Yes! Thanks to this, I was able to calm down and concentrate on the exam!”

“Then that's good.”

With that said, Vincent approached me—

—and subsequently put his hand on my head.

*Huh?*

I stayed still. I accepted Vincent's hand without resistance.

“It seems that you've misunderstood me, but I'm rooting for you and Nigel. However, I'm sure there will be some hardships going forward. Good luck.” Said Vincent.

His words were soft and warm.

The impression I had of him—in which he was cold and ruthless—thawed.

“Yes...! I'll be a woman recognized by everyone!”

“*Fuu*. That's the spirit.”

Vincent slowly retracted his hand.

At that moment, I saw it—

—the corners of his lips were slightly raised.

“Vince...”

Looking in the direction of the voice, I saw Nigel.

Apparently, he had chased after me.

“Do your best. After all, your territory is facing many crises.”

“Who are you to tell me that? Even if you didn’t say it, I would still show you how much I can develop my territory.”

“Well said.”

Finally, Vincent turned his back to us and went out the gate.

I stood rooted in place until I could no longer see his back.

“Eliane.”

Nigel put his hand on my shoulder.

“I’ll ask you again—does Eliane hate Vince?”

“No. I wasn’t good at dealing with him at first, but I don’t think he’s a bad person.”

Especially after that exchange we just had.

My impression of him changed a lot. I thought he had a cold personality, but on the contrary, he seemed to have a kind and warm personality.

Nevertheless...

“I don’t understand why he’s called the ‘Duke of Ice.’”

“In a sense, it may be a Vince-like nickname—as in, one easily misunderstood by people.”

I couldn’t disagree with Nigel.

# Chapter 79

## Side story: Vincent

“Lord Vincent, you seem to be in a good mood today. Do you have good tidings?”

Upon being asked by his butler, Sebas, Vincent immediately put a hand to his cheek.

“Do I?”

“Yes, your expression is different from usual, my Lord.”

“...I don't think so.”

“This Sebas wouldn't miss such a thing, my Lord.”

Confused, Vincent touched his cheek—he didn't seem to be sick.

Ever since Vincent was born, Sebas had been his private butler.

Vincent was convinced that what he was feeling was something only Sebas would understand.

“...Well, I met an interesting woman”

“Hoo?”

“Maybe she's the cause.”

“Well, well...”

Sebas withheld a smile.

*Why is he smiling? Is he having fun?*

Vincent was about to leave the city where the royal castle was located.

He was on the way back to his own territory.

The woman he had recalled... it was none other than Eliane.

At first, when Nigel had told him of his fiancée, Vincent thought it was some kind of joke.



Nigel hadn't been interested in women since their school days.

When a woman with a beautiful appearance and a perfect family tried to approach Nigel, he didn't even spare her a glance.

*He might be distrustful of women...*

Vincent paid close attention to that attitude of Nigel's— *even though he's the future king...*

Suddenly, a man like him found a fiancée.

She was a beautiful woman.

She seemed to be a brilliant healer and mentor. Furthermore, because of her, creating holy water became feasible.

He also heard that she had created a barrier to protect the entire kingdom. He didn't know whether or not that was true, though.

Her skill as a healer was flawless.

But from what he heard, she wasn't of an influential noble family.

Vincent had never heard such a story before. At first, he doubted his ears.

"Still, she's his beloved. I considered figuring out what kind of woman she is... and she managed to exceed my expectations."

Vincent spoke to Sebas whom didn't reply.

At the same time, Vincent, whom had a long relationship with Sebas, knew that he was paying attention.

The moment Vincent entered the throne room, he saw a beautiful woman.

At that time, Vincent felt as if he was in a pinch.

*Is she Nigel's fiancée?*

Apparently, his assumption was correct.

"I've heard of some countries falling into ruin after being deceived by venomous woman. I was wary to the kind of woman she was. I'm relieved. She's different."

Vincent was entrusted with a territory by the king.

As such, he was confident in his ability to discern people.

Despite that, Eliane seemed to be terrified of him.

Why was she doing nothing? In the first place, she was the prince's fiancée. Her status was higher than his. Why was she afraid of him, a mere duke?

Such were his thoughts at that time.

Not only was she beautiful, her healing power was also exceptional.

It was merely Vincent's guess, but she seemed to be pure-hearted.

She'd be perfect as Nigel's fiancée.

...Despite that, she was also naïve.

"Some aristocrats and royal families will find a problem with the fact that she's a mere commoner. I think that as long as she has the ability, her status won't matter much, but... still, there will be some people who don't like her."

Was she aware of that?

He was half intrigued, and half concerned.

The next day, due to his worry, he went to see Eliane. With good intentions, Vincent decided to warn her.

*"Are you worthy of being Nigel's fiancée?"*

*"I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything bad. I heard about you from Nigel. You seem to have worked as a healer until now."*

*"That means, you aren't an aristocrat."*

Even if she and Nigel loved each other, the same couldn't be said about others.

Once those who objected appeared, would she be able to deal with them?

That was what he was asking.

Nevertheless, she glared back at him. There was strong determination within her eyes.

*Hoo...?*

He didn't know why he was being gazed at with such hostility, but he had to admire her courage.

Even though she was being pressured by a man larger than herself, she remained unafraid.

Indeed. Vincent was impressed.

At that time, Vincent concluded that Eliane wasn't a mere girl.

Even if there was a rift between her and Nigel, she'd never be scared and would confront it.

However, as a result of her strong gaze, Vincent's playful side was tickled.

Vincent further entrapped her against the wall, eliminating all her escape, and inched even closer.

*"W, won't you move aside? Doing this to a woman isn't very praiseworthy."*

Still, she didn't waver.

Without realizing it, he said that a bad guy would eat her.

It was an embarrassing thing he dared not mention to anyone else.

He wanted to talk with Eliane a little more, but a man who appeared to be a vassal appeared. Their conversation ended there.

*"But don't forget this—what does it mean for a naïve girl like you to stand beside Nigel? Although the outcome might be different if everyone were to learn your true worth."*

After giving her that advice, Vincent left.

Of course she possessed the talent to be a healer and a pharmacist.

She kept proving to everyone that she was worthy to stand next to Nigel.

However.

“Kukuku, who would’ve thought that due to misunderstanding my words, she’d end up taking the qualification exam...

even if she didn’t do that, she’s already beyond amazing.”

“You have always been bad at talking, Lord Vincent. That’s why she misunderstood you. It’s the same as when you purged your aides long ago.”

Sebas was referring to that time he fired his aides who partook in illegal activities.

It seemed that they had used the territory’s budget to gamble.

His late father was a kind lord. Although Vincent had wondered what his father would have done in such a situation, there was no way for Vincent to let them go.

Vincent immediately pursued them, dismissed those whom had been deceiving him, and tried them under the law as criminals.

However, someone spread a rumor that he executed them all.

By the way, he didn’t.

After leaving behind their titles, they all found quiet lives in the countryside amidst the mountain. However, if they were motivated, Vincent was sure they’d start over and return to politic.

*Although I don’t think they have that kind of courage.*

“I’m curious as to why Vincent is called the ‘Duke of Ice’. Still, you should use your authority to improve your image a little more.”

“I’m not interested. Besides, I’m not good at that.”

At Sebas’ words, Vincent smiled.

*I see, because I am referred to as the ‘Duke of Ice’, she misunderstood me.*

At first, Vincent thought he had been given a misleading nickname, but didn’t deny it because he found it suited him.

“That amulet seems to have helped her a little. Well, I don’t think her impression of me has changed, though...”

“That’s not true.”

“Why is it so?”

“This Sebas has been taking care of you. That much, I already know.”

Sebas said such without changing his expression.

He was still an ambiguous man.

*If such a woman were to be the future queen, the kingdom should be safe...*

Vincent recalled his stay in the city, and concluded so.

“But I can’t let my guard down. Sebas, I’ll resume my duties as soon as I get home.”

“Why don’t you rest a little?”

“I don’t have time for that. The new dungeon looks well-handled thanks to the holy water, but there’s still a lot of problems in the territory.”

His was a troublesome territory that had to be protected from being invaded by other kingdoms.

*Well, I’ve become the lord of such a territory...*

But—it was rewarding.

Vincent quickly switched his mindset and thought of his territory.

# Chapter 80

## Baldur's Plan

— *one kingdom captured.*

Baldur, the leader of the demon invaders, sat comfortably on the throne. He was discussing the future with his men.

“Turns out conquering a kingdom isn’t a big deal.”

Baldur’s subordinates nodded in response.

His subordinates resembled horned oxen with wings.

They were demons who consumed the souls of the living. That sort of undead was the main bulk of Baldur’s army. They stood at the gap between the living and the dead.

Hence why, not even the kingdom’s best soldiers could defeat Baldur’s men.

“Precisely! With someone as mighty as Lord Baldur, conquering a kingdom is easy!”

“*Fufu*. That begs the question—if humans are so weak, why didn’t we, the demons, invade them sooner?”

“Exactly. No one can tell what those old bats are thinking. Didn’t they say that there is someone with a magnificent power?”

“I wonder if they’re talking about the saint.”

“Could be.”

Certainly, that saint was one troublesome human.

Her barrier wasn’t just perfect, but it could also protect the entire kingdom. Furthermore, as long as the someone wasn’t dead, she could heal all wounds in an instant.

That was the reason Baldur hesitated over invading that kingdom.

However.

“This is one foolish kingdom. They banished the saint. I wonder why they didn’t realize that act was the equivalent to suicide.”

“Totally.”

In exiling the saint, that kingdom had vastly helped the demons.

“The plan is going well.”

Baldur licked his lips with his tongue.

Even though he had conquered a kingdom, Baldur wasn’t satisfied.

In the first place, Baldur’s goal was to dominate the world. That kingdom might have been one of the most powerful in the world—however, conquering it didn’t mean the whole world had fallen into his hands.

Nonetheless, the fact that the demons had managed to capture that kingdom was already satisfying enough.

However, as it was, they wouldn’t have enough means to conquer the world.

Although his plan was steadily progressing, the end goal wouldn’t be met as things were.

*For that reason, I let the foolish people of this kingdom live, but... I just want to kill them right now... ah, I can’t stand the mere sight of them...*

He required someone with enormous magical power to achieve his goal.

As Baldur contemplated, his subordinate opened his mouth.

“By the way, Lord Baldur, regarding the spirits...”

“Oh, that’s right. I forgot because I focused on seizing this kingdom. Either capture them, or eliminate them as they are.”

“Understood.”

For such reasons, Baldur had prepared a special device for the spirits.

Before invading the kingdom, Baldur had intended to control the spirits.

As such, he generated miasma in the forest where the spirits lived to gradually weaken them.

However, because the kingdom's barrier had suddenly disappeared, he shifted his attention...

"Those spirits are also quite stubborn. To be honest, they're more troublesome than the people of this kingdom. Since we already knew the location, we could've just invaded them... but that village's barrier is quite the hindrance..."

The spirits' barrier was comparable to that of a saint.

Therefore, it was extremely difficult to break through said barrier, even for Baldur.

Even if Baldur managed to, he'd lose a considerable amount of magic in the process. Afterwards, there was a possibility he might come face to face with the spirits. Fighting in that state would be risky.

"First, we're going to cover the forest with miasma to force them out."

"The miasma should've completely engulfed them by this point, despite that, even though Lord Baldur's plan is perfect..."

"...For some reason, the miasma disappeared. That's an impossible feat for the spirits, which means..."

"I looked into it. Apparently, the former saint of this kingdom is residing in the neighboring kingdom. Furthermore, she joined sides with the spirits."

"As I thought..."

Baldur's face distorted for a moment—

—that saint... what an abominable existence.

*Why does that girl insist upon getting in my way?!*

With the saint's power, the miasma could be erased. That was his only concern.

After all, he heard that the saint was confined in the another kingdom.

Therefore, for her to eliminate the miasma of the spirits' village... it should be virtually impossible...



...How could her banishment have develop into that?

Well, thanks to that, Baldur was able to carry out his plan, which was to conquer that kingdom. That also happened to be his main priority. It could be said that the result was alright.

“Now that we know where the saint is, our next step should be obvious. The saint who’ve lifted the miasma should be considered a benefactor by the spirits.”

“That’s right... then, what do you have in mind?”

“How foolish you are. I’m saying that as long as we remove the saint, the spirits wouldn’t stand a chance.”

Baldur lifted the corners of his mouth.

His expression was akin to that of a sly snake which preyed upon another’s blood.

“Isn’t it convenient? If we capture both the saint and the spirits, our plan will advance in one go.”

Baldur stood up.

“First of all—the saint. Capture her.”

“I understand.”

The saint and the spirits were connected.

At first glance, it sounded like bad news, but Baldur didn’t think so.

*It’s, in fact, good news. The invincible spirits have created a gap.*

From now on, he’d be even busier—thought Baldur.

*Oh, right, what’s the superb buffoon doing?*

Baldur suddenly lifted his hand.

An image was projected in the empty space before him.

*“L, leave! Get out of here! If you think you can do as you please to me—”*

*“C, Claude... my face, my face!”*

A man and woman were trapped in an underground prison.

They were none other than Prince Claude, and the poisonous insect of that kingdom—Leticia.

For someone who had been spoiled his entire life, a hard bed and only being given then bare minimum of meals must had been unbearable.

*Hmm, a foolish man. He should be grateful that he's still alive.*

Originally, Baldur planned to kill him immediately. But, because Claude was a prince, he might still be of use.

Did Claude not understand Baldur could kill him at any given chance?

“If he makes any more noise, burn the prince’s throat so he can’t speak. He’s too noisy.”

“I understand.”

Baldur decided to leave Claude to his subordinates.

*Well then... how to proceed?*

In Baldur’s eyes, the human world, the spirits, and also the future in which he had dominated the world were reflected.

## Chapter 81

### A Peaceful Journey...?

After Vincent left the city, I finally regained my calm.

“I’ll go.”

*“No, Ralph will.”*

In the courtyard.

Douglas and Ralph were glaring at each other.

“Can you protect Eliane?”

*“Don’t look down on a divine creature. Besides, doesn’t Eliane hate being hugged by you?”*

“Kukuku, what are you saying? It seems that you have failed to understand. Eliane, why don’t you explain to him?”

“Hmm, I don’t hate it, but I also don’t like it.”

“Good grief.”

Douglas crossed his arms in dissatisfaction.

“What could you be dissatisfied with? Is me carrying you not comfortable enough? If so, I will hold you a little more gently.”

“T-that’s not the case!”

*My heart beats like crazy when you hold me, and I don’t exactly enjoy that!*

...I couldn’t say that because I knew Douglas wouldn’t comprehend.

“Should I ask for Ralph-chan’s to accompany me this time around? I want to introduce him to Philip and the others.”

*“Hey, are you treating Ralph like a pet? Or more like, do you think Ralph is merely a dog?”*

Ralph pursued the answer, but I didn’t give him one.

That was right.

I decided to visit Philip and the others that day.

The reason... was of course to cook.

Recently, I couldn’t make enough time to go visit them because of Vincent, and also because I was studying for the qualification.

It had been more or less 10 days since my last visit.

I wanted to see the spirits soon.

“If there’s any danger, there’s that ball I gave you.”

“That’s right...”

It’d be both dangerous and time consuming to go alone, so I thought of having Douglas or Ralph follow me.

It was also possible to bring both. However, going with a dragon and a divine creature might scare Philip and the others.

Besides, there was no saying Douglas and Ralph wouldn’t get into a fight.

Although it was closer to quarreling. I didn't think they seriously hate each other. They were merely playing together.

I was a little uneasy about leaving Douglas though...

"Well, I'm a patient man. I will protect this city in your stead."

Well, if he truly were to assume such role, I could rest assured.

"But, if anything is to happen, call me immediately. Don't hesitate to use it."

"Of course."

Alright, such was the rule.

Honestly, traveling with Douglas... required some mental preparation. However, with Ralph, I could relax.

"Then, Ralph-chan, why don't we take our leave?"

*"Leave it to me."*

I climbed on top of Ralph's back.

For the first time in a while, I was riding Ralph. But, as I thought, fluffy was justice! It was very comfortable to the touch!

"Time to depart!"

*"Woof!"*

Ralph cried out as he kicked off the ground and took off running.

Ralph ran like the wind.

We were steadily approaching the spirits' forest.

His speed concerned me, I was worried I might be shaken off...

*"Don't worry. Don't look down on Ralph's ability. Ralph will never drop Eliane."*

"I'll be in your care."

After riding Ralph for a bit, I gradually got used to the speed.

I began to enjoy the scenery.

“Even so, this place sure is quiet.”

*“That’s right.”*

The green meadow seemed as if it would spread forever.

A piercing blue sky...

The wind was comfortable, as the road continued—

—I began to feel sleepy.

What a peaceful journey...

“Huh?”

I saw a boy crouching near the side of the road.

“What’s that child doing?”

*“He seems to be suffering...”*

“I’m worried... Ralph-chan, could you slow down a little?”

*“Umu, got it.”*

Ralph stopped running and started walking slowly so as to not scare the boy.

Was he alright...

My arrival to the spirits’ village would be delayed, but it wasn’t as if I could just overlook that.

“What’s wrong?”

I got off from Ralph and talked to the boy.

He slowly raised his face—he looked like he was about to cry.

“B, big sister... my mom, was taken hostage...”

“Taken hostage?”

“Forgive me!”

I didn't know what was happening—

—it was at that moment.

A strong pain struck the back of my head, and I lost consciousness.

# Chapter 82

## The Restless Spirit King

POV: Philip

*“What’s wrong, my king? You’re fidgety.”*

“Am I?”

A child spirit, which looked like a ball of light—Al, brought that to his attention. Philip instinctively responded.

*“It’s quite rare of you. After all, you’re always calm. Not to mention, until a while ago, you seemed to be expecting someone.”*

“I see... so that was how I appeared.”

Looking out the window, Philip calmly analyzed himself.

The child spirit was keen.

The reason was probably due to Saint Eliane.

After the spirit’s forest was engulfed in miasma, Philip ventured outside the village to seek the saint’s aid.

He thought she’d be able to counteract the miasma with her power.

...However, after he was dismissed by her kingdom, Philip was at loss. The saint was his hope, after all.

Nevertheless, he couldn’t give up. Somebody able to dispel the miasma without being a saint could still exist.

He was holding on to his last straw.

Then—Philip met her.

“Al, what do you think of Eliane?”

Al replied, *“Hmm. That saint is a very nice person. I feel safe whenever she’s near me. Her cooking is also delicious.”*

“...You, feel safe? I see.”

For some reason, whenever Philip was near her, he felt as if entangled threads were being unraveled for some unknown reason.

There was no doubt she was a good person.

Thanks to her, the miasma was dispelled and the forest was saved.

For her to be the saint of the present era—what a relief.

He truly thought so.

But, more than that, she was an enigma.

Before he noticed it, he had been following her every movements.

When she laughed, his chest would tighten.

“Her cooking is delicious—there’s no doubt about that. That was the first time I ever ate such delicious food.”

*“Right?”*

Al agreed with Philip’s words.

Until now, the spirits weren’t interested in cooking.

In the first place, spirits didn’t need to eat like humans.

As long as they had clean water and air, they wouldn’t die.

That was why, spirits weren’t interested in delicious cuisine.

After eating her cooking, though, Philip regretted it.

Omelet rice—chilled somen—ice cream—...

All of them were delicious. Just eating them naturally made him smile.

Before Philip—no, all the spirits—realized it, everyone was looking forward to her cooking.

It was to the point that even if Eliane made an unreasonable request in exchange for her food, he’d fulfil it...

“...Why hasn’t Eliane arrived yet?”

After receiving a letter from a spiritual guide, Philip was informed in



advance of the saint's visit.

She'd usually arrive around that time...

*"Don't be so anxious, my king, the saint will surely arrive."*

"I hope so..."

What Al said was justified.

Yet, for some reason, he felt strange.

As Al had pointed out, he might be restless.

The moment Philip thought he couldn't endure it anymore, he thought of picking her up.

"Huh?"

Due to the special barrier, Philip instantly knew whenever the forest was invaded.

The barrier was so advanced, not even a single fly could bypass it.

At first, Philip thought Eliane had arrived...

"This magical power... no way!"

Philip stood up immediately.

He opened his mouth to give instructions to others—

—before that could happen, however, a voice directly rang inside Philip's mind.

*"You noticed me already? Nice to meet you. I'm Baldur. At this point, it should be obvious what kind of creature I am."*

Philip's tension peaked.

—the demons had invaded the forest!?

However.

"Why are you here? I have no intention of speaking to you."

Philip pretended to be calm.

Baldur resumed his telepathy.

*“How foolish you are. You have no right to tell me what to do. Please let me enter the village for a moment.”*

“Are you an idiot? As if I’d let a demon enter my village.”

The village should be impossible for the demons to enter. It was because the barrier around the village was even stronger.

No one could grasp the exact location of the village. Even if it was coincidentally found, the barrier couldn’t be broken.

There were various races—such as humans and dragons—in that world. Amongst them, the demon race was the cruelest.

In order to achieve their purpose, they wouldn’t hesitate to do anything—even if it meant killing.

There was no way Philip could let them enter the village.

*It’s okay... there’s a barrier around this village... even if they’re demons, they shouldn’t be able to easily destroy it. I mustn’t panic...*

Philip calmed himself down.

Baldur’s following words shook him to the core.

*“How cruel... you’d let the saint enter, but not me?”*

“—!”

He took a sharp breath.

*Why did he know that we’re affiliated with the saint? No, stay calm... even if he knows that, he can’t do anything...*

*nothing will change...*

Philip began considering what to do next, despite that, Baldur was one step ahead.

*“That’s why, I am a little jealous of the saint. I have no choice but to punish her.”*

“What are you talking about?”

*“There’s something I’d like you to see.”*

An image vaguely floated in Philip’s mind.

When he saw it, Philip’s eyes widened.

“E, Eliane?!”

It was a dark and dingy place.

Eliane was trapped in a room surrounded by iron bars.

# Chapter 83

## A Deplorable Request

“What have you done to her!?”

Philip screamed in anger.

The demon, Baldur, was pleased by his reaction.

“She did it to herself. She was trying to help a little boy. Therefore, my subordinates took the chance.”

“Don’t lie!”

“Even though it’s the truth? Therefore, why don’t you let me enter? We can discuss this further in a more suitable location.”

“What are you planning...”

Philip concluded that Baldur was lying.

He was determined to reject Baldur’s request.

However—

“—She hasn’t suffered any rough treatment, *yet*. ”

Baldur casually continued at Philip’s confusion.

“Y’know what, my subordinates are a bit troublesome. When they find a cute girl, they have an urge to *play* with her. If they actually decide to play with her, that girl might not step foot in your village ever again.”

“*Guh...*”

Philip slammed his fist on the table.

*They are going to torture her. Eliane is in danger. What do I do!? I can’t involve a bystander like her in this!*

It was suicidal to welcome Baldur into the village.

However, if Philip were to refuse, Eliane might be killed.

*What a bunch of cowards!*

There was no other option.

“I understand. However, Baldur, you’re the only one allowed to enter. Promise me that.”

“Fufu, I understand. For now, that’ll suffice for me. Let’s talk face-to-face.”

Baldur was in a good mood.

Philip, on the other hand, was gritting his teeth. He was trying to come up with a plan.

The reason he imposed that condition was because he was sure the spirits would be able to defeat Baldur.

However, there was no guarantee Baldur would fulfil his end of the bargain.

Most likely, his subordinates were waiting to launch an ambush.

*Think...! A means to overcome this situation...!*

Philip thought, but couldn’t come up with anything.

Smearred with humiliation, Philip was forced to dispel the barrier.

“Quite an exotic place, this is.”

They were at the square in the center of the village.

Usually, everyone would be enjoying Eliane’s food at that place.

However, a disaster had taken place.

Philip and Baldur faced each other. The wary spirits surrounded them.

“...What’s your goal?”

Philip asked in a low voice.

“No~ don’t look so scary. I just came to talk, therefore let’s get along?”

Baldur asked for a handshake, but Philip ignored it.

Baldur's feminine tone clung to Philip's ears, making him even more nauseous.

Baldur showed a distorted grin.

"My aim is only this— *I want to cooperate with you spirits.*"

"Cooperate...?"

"Yes. Specifically, to provide us a place to stay. I want some of my demons to live here."

As if he could allow that!

The spirits, who lacked the means to defend themselves, wouldn't be able to directly confront the demons.

That was exactly why they hid themselves in a remote forest and raised a powerful barrier.

That wasn't the end of Baldur's demands.

"Also, one more thing. I want you to assist us in pursuing our goal."

"What on earth..."

"We, the demons, are preparing to become the world's dominator. For that reason, we're going to perform a ritual at the center of the human's kingdom."

Philip turned pale in an instant.

"Wha?! You still haven't given up yet!? Do you truly think you're capable of that!?"

"Of course, I alone won't be able to do it. Despite that, my plan is flawless—it just merely requires a lot of sacrifices."

Baldur winked.

By 'sacrifices', Baldur meant the lives of the kingdom's people.

*Wait... how many would it take to ensure the ritual's success?*

Despite that, it wasn't about quantity. For the demons to complete the ritual themselves would also prove quite the task.

Under normal circumstance, a huge amount of time was required.

For that reason, Baldur was trying to utilize the spirits who had vast amount of magic.

*But, that's just deplorable... if that ritual succeeds, the world is doomed. I have to stop it at all cost.*

Regardless, it wasn't as if Baldur would take his refusal kindly.

What should he do?

When Philip thought about it...

"I'm not expecting you to do it, I'm ordering you. If you refuse... well, aren't you pleasing to the eye? Will you be able to withstand my play?"

Baldur licked his tongue.

*I see... it was never a negotiation to begin with...*

However, Philip found a ray of light in Baldur's words.

"...You can do whatever you want to me. Until my last breath, I'll try to keep up with you. But don't touch the other spirits."

*"I understand— is what I'm going to say, but I don't want to lie. I plan to play with other spirits, as well."*

Philip clicked his tongue.

*As I thought, he won't be satisfied with just me... well, it wasn't like I could believe the words uttered by a demon, either.*

What should he do, then?

It was impossible to reject the proposal and fight Baldur. Even if they managed to defeat Baldur, the other demons would annihilate them.

However, if he didn't help them, he didn't know what kind of torment Eliane would face.

That saint whom was beautiful inside out.

She helped Philip and the others without expecting anything in return.

*I'm sorry, everyone. We can't involve our benefactor!*

Philip stared straight into Baldur's eyes.

"...I, understand—"

When Philip was about to answer—

"—There's no need to do that!"

A clear voice echoed in the village.

Philip instantly turned around.

"E, Eliane!?"

That was right.

It was none other than the girl whom should've been taken captive by the demons. Nigel also stood beside her.



# Chapter 84

## I'm Being Looked Down on too Much!

Time rewound a little.

"Huh, where is this?"

I felt a dull headache.

Awake, I gradually opened my eyes.

*"Eliane, are you awake?"*

Ralph was beside me. Apparently, I was asleep on top of Ralph. Or, fainted, to be precise.

"Ralph-chan, what happened?"

*"As you can see, You and Ralph were captured by a mysterious group and taken here. How could Ralph fall into such a predicament? Now Ralph is too ashamed to face that dragon man..."*

Ralph was depressed.

I reassuringly stroked Ralph's back. "Ralph-chan isn't the one at fault."

"F, forgive me, big sister, it's my fault."

"It's not this child's fault! Blame me, instead!"

In the same room were also the figures of a child and a woman who seemed to be his mother.

Both of them were frightened. They wouldn't stop apologizing.

"You aren't at fault, either. I'm glad you're safe."

I smiled so as not to scare them.

However.

"No matter how I think about it, that was a trap..."

I was caught off guard.

Currently, we were trapped in what appeared to be a cell.

I tried to open the door, but couldn't. Furthermore, it was magically locked—thus, it was impossible to open with force.

“Hee, you are finally awake.”

A person who appeared to be a guard approached.

Wings protruded from his back, and he also had two horns.

From his unusual appearance, it seemed that the one who had captured us wasn't human.

“Are you... a demon?”

“Well, it should be obvious.”

The demon showed an unpleasant smirk.

The demon race—they usually didn't appear in public.

Multiple different voices echoed from other places.

I didn't know where they were, but there seemed to be a lot of demons present.

“For what reason do you confine me. Not to mention, to kidnap such a small child?”

I asked, however, I had already guessed the answer.

“You're hostages.”

Such was the reply.

Perhaps confident of his victory, the demon was laidback.

...How foolish.

“Hostages?”

“Right now, our lord, Baldur should be visiting the spirits. Baldur is a strong man, but he can't face the spirits head-on.

Therefore, you will be our hostage. That way, we can negotiate with the spirits.”

“—!”

I was at lost for words.

It seemed that when I attempted to help the child, I was struck by demons from behind.

The spirits... by that, they meant Philip and the others?

They planned that from the beginning?

“Let me out of here. Take me to the spirits, now!”

“Ha! Even in a situation like this, you still worry about others. Too bad, though! You won’t be able to escape! In the first place, it’s not like you can open this door. Even if you manage to escape, there are many demons lingering around. Will you be able to drag your limbs and escape from here, I wonder?”

The demon joyfully sat in a nearby chair.

Of course, I was aware of that.

I didn’t expect it to be easy.

“Big sis, are we going to be fine?”

“Please, I’m not asking much, you can leave me here... but please, can you save this child?”

When I turned around, the child and his mother begged me.

However,

“It’s alright. I will get the two of you out.”

I never intended to abandon any of them. Of course, that included Ralph.

*“Eliane, what are you going to do? If we wait, Nigel and the dragon man may come to our rescue, but we don’t have the luxury to sit around and relax...”*

“Yes, I know.”

I didn’t know what would befall Philip and the others.

However, the demons were looking down on me too much!

I used telepathy and started communicating with someone in the royal capital.

*“...Huh? What’s wrong, Eliane? You usually don’t speak to me through telepathy...”*

Douglas’ voice.

Apparently, my location wasn’t too far from his.

Using telepathy at such a distance wasn’t be a problem. Did the demons perhaps think that even if I could use telepathy, I wouldn’t be saved?

*“Douglas, I don’t have much time, so I’ll be frank—I’ve been captured by demons.”*

*“Huh?”*

I kept talking to Douglas through my mind.

*“Can you tell Nigel right away?”*

*“Okay, but Nigel will also have to sneak around. Can you escape by yourself?”*

*“I think I can, but there are many demons keeping watch. It’ll be difficult for me to face them alone.”*

*“Well... the fact that you can use telepathy like this means those demons are looking down on you.”*

*“Exactly.”*

The demons probably weren’t informed enough. As such, they became lackluster.

Did they honestly think I’d just do nothing?

Did they think I’m but a damsel in distress who can only wait for her prince?

...What a shame.

Such was the fatal blunder of the demons. They didn’t even bother to

properly do their research.

*“Douglas, my plan is hereby—...”*

I communicated my plan.

After saying, ‘I understand.’ Douglas cut off the telepathy.

Alright.

Time to break out!

Another demon had appeared before our cell, and was discussing our fate.

Well, it didn’t matter how many there were.

“Uhm, pardon me?”

I called out to the two demons.

“I’d like to go to the bathroom, where is it?”

*“Huuuh?* Just do it there. I have to keep you under my surveillance.”

“B, but, as a woman, it’s embarrassing. Can you at least turn around...?”

“Ha! Who are you to order me? But, if I were to mistreat you, Lord Baldur might get angry... Alright, I’ll be merciful, but only this once. I’ll turn around for three seconds, but that’s it.”

“Haha! There’s no way a girl can finish her business in three seconds!”

While laughing, the two demons turned around.

But... 3 seconds were enough.

“Ei!”

I immediately touched the prison’s door and channeled my magic.

I learned how to control my magic from Robert and became proficient at it!

In less than a second, the prison’s door was unlocked. It opened with a click.

“Huh—”

—the demons noticed it immediately.

“Hey, you, what kind of—”

“—Douglas!”

Before the demons could rush towards me, I took out something hidden beneath my clothes.

It was the jewel I received from Douglas.

When magical power was poured into the jewel, a divine light enveloped my surroundings.

By the time the light disappeared...

“How courageous of you demons to try and kidnap Eliane. Do you know who she is, and what she has accomplished?”

An arrogant man with his arms crossed appeared before me.

I had summoned Douglas.

# Chapter 85

## The Counterattack Begins

“Who are you—!? Where did you come from—!?”

“Hey, wait a minute... this magical power, could that be...”

While the two demons were panicking.

“...*Lame.*”

Douglas blew them away in no time.

The demons slammed against the wall and fainted.

“Eliane, are you okay?”

“Yes.”

Douglas looked more dependable than usual.

“We don’t have time to chat. I heard there are other demons...”

I could hear multiple footsteps approaching.

The demons might had noticed something was odd.

But it was too late.

“Douglas, do you know where this is?”

“It’s not too far from the city. I’ve also informed Nigel. He’s going to charge in with his knights.”

That was a relief.

As I could still communicate telepathically with Douglas, I assumed place wasn’t too far from the city. There was no problem, then.

“I’ll head to the spirits’ forest with Ralph. Douglas, can I leave them to you?”

“No problem. Recently, I haven’t been exercising. This is a good opportunity.”

Douglas shrugged his shoulders.

Then, he turned towards the child and his mother.

“Who are those two?”

“They are also captives of the demons. Can I leave them to you as well?”

“Gahaha! Piece of cake! Even if they are demons, they’re of a lower class. I can beat them all with my eyes closed.”

Douglas was powerful.

The demons wouldn’t have expected me to summon him.

“...Although, I sense they have surveillance magic. It wouldn’t be strange if other demons notice this incident, as well. If an archdemon comes as a reinforcement, you might be in for a bit of trouble.” Said Douglas.

“Don’t worry about that.” I said.

I also sensed it.

I’d think of a way to deal with it.

“Alright, let’s do this.”

I held my hand towards the prison and created something.

It was a clone of me.

“*Hoo...* a clone. That shall do the trick.”

I had shown the same spell to Robert.

However, the clone couldn’t move. Still, it should be able to deceive them for a while.

“It looks like we’re inside an old tower that’s no longer in use. If you jump out of that window, you’ll be able to get out right away.”

Douglas pointed at a large window.

I looked down—it was far from the ground. If I jumped from such a height, I wouldn’t remain unscathed.



However.

“Ralph-chan, can you jump from here while carrying me.”

*“Of course. Finally, Ralph can show you his cool side! Believe in Ralph!”*

Ralph stood before me.

It was a little scary... but when I heard Ralph, I no longer felt that way.

In the meantime, the demons were rushing towards us.

“Douglas! I’ll leave the rest to you!”

“Umu!”

I parted from the mother and child with the words, “You can trust this man.” Then, I climbed on top of Ralph.

“Oi! Don’t let that woman escape!”

“Lord Baldur will absolutely be enraged!”

The demons tried to catch me, but Douglas stood before me.

“Don’t look back, just run!”

“Ralph-chan! Go!”

“Woof!”

Ralph raised his voice and leaped out of the window.

A floating sensation. The ground was gradually approaching.

However, Ralph flawlessly landed on the ground. I didn’t even feel the impact of the landing.

I calculated the distance from there to the city and the spirits’ village. ...Most likely, I should be able join with Nigel and head to the spirits’ village together.

First, I decided to join Nigel.

It’d be a little difficult for me to fight the demons alone.

“Ralph-chan! Please head East from here!”

*"I understand!"*

"Eliane!"

Nigel embraced me. We had only been separated for a little while, but when he did that, I felt like crying for some reason.

However,

"Nigel, you may have heard from Douglas, but the spirits seem to be in trouble."

"Yes, I've heard."

I didn't have the luxury to bask in the afterglow of our reunion.

"Let's head out right away."

*"Get on Ralph, it'll be faster that way."*

Ralph turned his back towards Nigel.

Did Nigel understand?

"Will do. Then, Adolf, we're heading to the spirits' forest. Please follow after me."

He gave instructions to Adolf, the knight captain whom was behind him.

"I understand. But, will you be alright? The opponent is a demon. Only with you and Eliane..."

"It's okay. Did you forget the time with Alberto? With Eliane, I can defeat anything!"

"I see. I believe in you."

Nigel was a perfect match for the blessing of the goddess. Even if our opponent was an archdemon, I didn't think he would lose.

Nigel and I rushed to the spirits' forest on top of Ralph.

—then, we arrived.

"Saint—!"

The child spirits, Al and Mars, approached us.

“The village is in trouble—!”

“At this rate, our King will die!”

“It’s alright. I’m already aware what is happening. I shall go help him right away.”

Al and Mars were panicking.

Probably out of fear, they had left the village.

We had Al and Mars dispel the barrier and immediately entered the village.

I spotted Philip in the square, and a woman—the archdemon—they were facing each other. Upon looking closer, said

‘woman’ seemed to be a man.

“*I understand*— is what I’m going to say, *but I don’t want to lie*. I plan to play with other spirits, as well.”

“...I, understand—”

—when Philip was about to accept the archdemon’s conditions.

“—There’s no need for that!”

The two of us appeared.

# Chapter 86

## I Don't Feel Like I'll Lose to Anyone Anymore

“Why are you here?!”

The moment the archdemon saw us, his eyes widened.

The archdemon was a beauty who exuded coldness.

I didn't know if demons had sexes, but he had an androgynous look. As such, his sex was difficult to determine.

However, the coldness he emanated was different from that of Vincent's.

Unlike Vincent, the archdemon didn't incite any fear within me.

It seemed that the archdemon's vile natured showed in his appearance.

“Philip, is that the archdemon called Baldur?”

Philip nodded.

*Bingo...!*

That archdemon was none other than the one who planned my kidnapping. Not to mention, he had also planned to do unspeakable things to Philip and others.

“But, Eliane, why are you here?”

“I'll explain everything later!”

Nigel stepped forward. With me in his embrace, we approached Baldur together.

Baldur smiled dauntlessly.

“I don't know why you're here, but it doesn't matter. The fact that I've already stepped into this village spells my victory.

Besides, it's not like I'm going to do anything to these spirits?”

“I find that hard to believe.”

Nigel stared straight at Baldur.

“*Fufu*~ well, people tend to misunderstand my intentions.”

The archdemon was lying.

Otherwise, he wouldn’t have involved such a small child in his plan to kidnap me.

Philip seemed to be suffering, too.

I decided Baldur wasn’t trustworthy.

“Hey, good-looking guy over there, I think we can get along?”

Baldur walked forward and extended his hand.

“Why don’t we become friends? I’ll show you something good.”

“*Hee*? What are you going to show me?”

“The scene of my becoming the world’s champion. I’ll make everyone kneel before you, to own the world—don’t you want it? If you join me, we can achieve that together.”

“I despise such ideas—”

—Nigel slapped Baldur’s hand, and unsheathed his sword.

“I’m not interested in such things. Sometimes, life doesn’t go as planned, hence why it’s fun.”

“Tch...!”

Baldur clicked his tongue.

Darkness radiated from Baldur’s body. Then it transformed into a wolf’s head and charged towards Nigel.

Baldur never intended to join hands with Nigel.

By pretending to shake hands, he was trying to catch Nigel off guard.

However,

“Haa—!”

As Nigel cried out and swung his sword, the darkness disappeared.

The impact caused Baldur to be blown back. Baldur proceeded to kneel on the ground.

However, Baldur's onslaught didn't end there.

"Don't look down on me!"

As Baldur extended his hand, the serpent of darkness flew straight towards Nigel again.

"Eliane, please wait for a moment. I'll settle it soon. Philip, leave the rest to me."

"I understand." I said.

"O, okay." Said Philip.

I entrusted the situation to Nigel.

"If it's only this, I won't lose."

The serpent of darkness was approaching.

However, Nigel wasn't afraid. He advanced towards Baldur.

The oncoming darkness was slashed to oblivion by Nigel.

"This is my second time using the blessing of the goddess. I'm getting used to it. I don't feel like I'll lose to anyone anymore!"

The blessing of the Goddess—

The power that I, as a saint, could bestow upon others.

I had already been determined that Nigel was compatible with the blessing of the goddess in a previous battle.

Baldur alone wouldn't be able to defeat Nigel.

"W, what is this!? It should've gone as I planned?! Why is everything a mess!?"

The darkness from Baldur's body began to run amok.

However, it was impossible for him, who lost his composure, to even scratch Nigel.

“It’s useless.”

After erasing the distance between them, Nigel vertically slashed Baldur.

“Guh—!”

Baldur managed to avoid it—but that was all.

Nigel thrust his sword right next to Baldur’s face and spoke with a cold voice.

“Let’s talk, shall we? What is your plan? Why are you doing this? Above all, for doing such a thing to Eliane, you shall be punished.”

I had never heard Nigel so angry before.

Just by looking at his back, I could tell that he was full of wrath.

“Ha! Eliane... you mean, that saint over there?”

However, Baldur refused to yield.

He was in a life-threatening situation, yet he still dared look at me with hostility.

“I despise women like you. Even though you’re actually useless, your head is filled with thoughts of protecting everyone!

You are so full of yourself! You keep on yammering about superficial things! When I look at you, I feel sick! I want to kill you right now!”

“I see. Well, it’s not like I want to be liked by you, anyway. Also, I’m not going to let myself be killed easily.”

I kept my eyes on Baldur as I answered.

Perhaps hating me even more, Baldur’s eyes filled with resentment.

“Do you think you’ve beaten me?”

“What are you going to do?”

Towards Nigel’s question, Baldur continued to smile.

“I don’t think you can protect the spirits alone. I have hundreds, or even thousands, of subordinates. Can you defeat them alone?”

“Hmm?”

There was sound from outside the village.

The forest was trembling.

“So, you aren’t bluffing.”

“Hahaha! You’re merely acting tough! My subordinates are strong, you know? They are undead! You can’t defeat them with a normal sword! How are you going to confront an immortal army like this!?”

“Well, I can’t fight them alone, that’s for sure.” Said Nigel.

Certainly, no matter how strong the goddess’ blessing was, dealing with hundreds or thousands demon soldiers was a little absurd.

However.

“I have an ally. Pay attention.”

“What? I don’t—”

Baldur immediately stopped talking.

A noisy voice could be heard.

However, when I listened carefully, it seemed that human voices were mixed amongst the demon-like screams.

“W, what is the meaning of this? What did you do? There’s no way anyone can stand up against my subordinates...

besides, your army shouldn’t have arrived, yet...”

“Indeed, it looks like my proud knights haven’t arrived, yet. But there is another ally in my kingdom that I can rely on.”

Nigel proudly continued.

“He’s infamous for his title, the ‘Duke of Ice.’”



# Chapter 87

## Together

□ Vincent's POV

The spirit forest.

"That guy, without explaining any further, told me to do some demon extermination..."

Vincent thought such while facing against the demon army.

Learning spiritual beings rescinded near his territory was quite surprising. What came off as more of a shock was the demon extermination.

Vincent was the first to arrive. He hadn't only led his knights but also gathered some adventurers. A battle was about to ensue near the spirit forest.

"Lord Vincent!"

The leader of Vincent's army spoke.

"How's the situation?"

"As you can see, thanks to the holy water, the demons are no problem!"

The undead.

A mere swing of a weapon wouldn't be able to defeat them.

In order to defeat the undead, it was necessary to devote a great deal of effort.

However, due to the dungeon thriving with undead, the soldiers had become accustomed to dealing with them. Thus, the undead were no longer a threat.

*Thousands of demon armies can be defeated easily... once again, I'm in awe at the holy water...*

The number of demons slowly decreased.

It was only a matter of time before they wiped them out.

*I have to thank her for this.*

Vincent thought of Eliane.

However, the battle wasn't over yet, even though it was obvious which side was going to win.

"Everyone, don't let your guard down."

Vincent inspired the soldiers and adventurers, and unsheathed his sword.

"At this rate, our victory is certain. We must do our best! If we managed to accomplish this, we'll receive plenty of reward from His Highness. I'd like all of you to cooperate with me!"

"Yes!!!"

Vincent's words boosted everyone's morale.

He carried his sword, which had been sprinkled with holy water, and confronted the demon army.

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Before coming here.

We stopped by Vincent's territory to prepare for exactly that.

The request was quite brief—dispatch to the spirit forest.

Not once did we think Baldur was our only enemy. He surely call forth his subordinates. Once that happen, Nigel would be in danger.

Therefore, we asked Vincent, who was the closest to the spirit forest, to send troops.

*"I can't refuse a request from Nigel and Eliane. However, do remember to generously reward me."*

With a grin, Vincent immediately prepared soldiers and adventurers.

Fortunately, because of the dungeon, there was a lot of holy water

stocked in Vincent's territory.

Judging from the demons in the tower, I concluded that Baldur's army mostly consisted of undead.

"M, my subordinates, are decreasing...!?"

Baldur must've sensed it. He began to tremble.

"What are you going to do, now?"

Nigel asked Baldur.

"It's your defeat, it seems. How are you going to turn the tide of the battle from here?"

"..."

Baldur shouldn't have any other plans, as was proven by his silence.

"Why, where did I go wrong?"

Baldur's voice was trembling.

"I wasn't wrong... it's all your fault! Especially the saint! You're the one who bestowed the blessing of the goddess upon this guy! Without you, my plan would have gone off without a hitch! The world would've become mine!"

I gazed at Baldur. I spoke without thinking.

"Sure, all I can do is spout naïve things. It may be a wishful thinking to protect everyone. But, you, on the other hand, are *shallow*. You did everything out of your own selfishness. As if we would lose to such a person!"

"That... gaze!"

The atmosphere shifted.

Baldur was completely angry.

"I hate those eyes! Are you pitying me!? Stop looking at me!"

The darkness emanating from his body increased exponentially.

"I will send you straight to hell!"

Not good!

“Nigel, get back! That archdemon is going to self-destruct!”

“What did you say!?”

Nigel quickly retreated from Baldur.

*No, not fast enough!*

I analyzed the darkness and concluded it'd swallow the entire forest.

I formed a barrier immediately. Nigel was my priority.

The spirits, and Vincent who was still fighting in the forest, also wouldn't be spared!

“Please, make it in time!”

I wasn't willing to give up. I tried to establish as wide a barrier as possible.

Was I going to fail?

—I wanted, to protect everyone...

“You needn't worry.”

Philip spoke to me in my desperation.

“The darkness, has dissipated?”

On the contrary, my surroundings were filled with light.

Philip, and also the other spirits, were shining.

Their magical power was enormous, and of light attribute.

The children spirits also desperately tried to activate light magic.

A large magic circle was formed in the sky.

Light shined down from the magic circle and enveloped Baldur.

“What a dazzling light... I see, it's my defeat...”

Baldur was about to self-destruct. However, it seemed that the magic of the spirits made it impossible for him to even release his magical

power.

He dropped his shoulders as if giving up and collapsed on spot. His body gradually disappeared.

“Amazing...”

Seeing the divine light, such a word leaked from my mouth.

“I have to show my cool side, as well.”

Philip bashfully rubbed his nose.

Seeing that Baldur had completely disappeared, I was relieved.

# Chapter 88

## It was a Short and Long Time

Soon after we had won the battle against Baldur, the knights reported that Vincent's army had successfully exterminated all the demons.

"You always make crazy requests..."

Vincent was complaining, which now seemed funny to me because I knew his actual personality.

That was right.

It seemed that Douglas had won, too.

*"They were weaker than I imagined. Of course, the mother and child are safe."*

Douglas spoke to me through telepathy. I was relieved to hear that.

Afterwards, we discussed with Philip regarding the future of the spirits.

"I'm thinking of destroying this village and moving to a different place."

"Eh? But, Baldur is already...."

"Of course, if I re-establish the barrier, the demons won't be able to enter this village. But... they already know the location. The miasma seem to have also been the work of the demons. There is no guarantee they won't attempt the same thing again in the future."

Philip was right.

But I felt lonely.

If he were to move to a faraway place, would I be unable to cook for them anymore?

Perhaps being considerate of me, Nigel appealed to Philip.

"You have a point... but, what if there were a guard?"

“A guard...?”

“Indeed. I’ve actually been thinking about it for a long time. This forest is close to Vince’s territory. Vince could rush to this forest as soon as something happens.”

Nigel put his hand on Vincent’s shoulder.

“The knights and the adventurers in his territory are excellent. There’s also holy water, something quite effective against the enemy.”

“That certainly is helpful... but, is it really fine?”

The spirits possessed enormous magical power, as evidenced by how they managed to stop Baldur.

However, their combat skills were lacking. Hence why, they lived in hiding until now.

“Of course, in return, you’ll have to pay us. I’d like you to share your water and vegetables—what do you think?”

Vincent offered a deal.

Philip looked a little anxious.

“I understand. That’s a cheap price.”

“It’s a deal.”

“Thank you very much. I’ve burdened you, Nigel. As I thought, humans are our savior.”

It seemed that we had made a deal.

Nigel turned around and winked at me.

Afterwards, we returned to the royal capital.

“How pretty!”

The roof balcony of the royal castle.

From beside Nigel, we overlooked the cityscape.

“Yes. Baldur’s end was a bit regrettable. I wanted to extort more information out of him, but... he disappeared without a trace.”

“Indeed...”

It couldn't be helped.

Rather than that, I decided to be proud that there were no casualties.

“Nigel.”

“Hm?”

I stared straight into Nigel's eyes, and continued.

“I need to get stronger.”

“Why do you think so?”

“I don't want to keep on relying on others.”

Even that time, I couldn't protect anyone. I put Philip and others in danger.

Without Douglas, I wouldn't have been able to escape from that tower.

Without Nigel, I couldn't have defeated Baldur.

Without Vincent, the aftermath wouldn't have been that satisfying.

Without Philip, Baldur would have succeeded at decimating the area.

I couldn't achieve anything alone.

“...Maybe that's the case.”

Nigel didn't deny my words.

“But the same goes with me. Without Eliane, I wouldn't have been able to protect anyone.”

In the gentle breeze, Nigel's hair was swaying.

“Hey, Eliane, could it be, you're trying to carry everything by yourself, again?”

“Eh?”

“There's no need to do that, you know. I've always wanted to say this—I want you to rely more on me. Does that sound selfish?”



Nigel seemed troubled.

“I don’t think so. But, maybe, it is as you say—I was trying to shoulder everything alone.”

A person couldn’t live alone.

For a while, I wondered if I would be a fiancée worthy of Nigel.

However, worrying alone like that might have been a mistake.

I should have been more honest with Nigel.

“Let’s hold hands and walk together towards the future, Nigel. Again, thank you.”

“Yes, I will be in your care.”

I held Nigel’s hand.

His hand was warm.

I had been hoping for that.

I had been hoping for my relationship with Nigel to grow deeper.

“Eliane.”

Nigel put his hands on my shoulder.

His face was getting closer and closer.

I didn’t refuse and obediently accepted Nigel’s lips.

It may have been for a moment, or it may have been forever.

It was as if time had stopped.

It was a short—long kiss.

Eventually, our lips parted and Nigel looked a bit panicked.

“F, forgive me! I suddenly did something like that! But, when I saw your face, I just lost control...!”

Nigel’s expression was unusual.

Nigel, who always acted mature, appeared like an adorable child for

some reason.

“It’s okay... I feel the same, thank you...”

“Well then, let’s head back, soon. If we stay in a place like this for too long, someone might get suspicious.”

Nigel tried to leave the roof balcony out of embarrassment.

However,

“Please wait, Nigel. I have one more thing I’d like to say to you.”

“Hmm?”

Nigel halted.

Honestly, I was wondering if I should really say it.

But I had decided.

I didn’t want to shoulder everything alone, anymore.

“I—”

—my words caused Nigel to open his eyes in astonishment.

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The royal castle’s treasury.

In a dimly-lit room, there was a brilliant sword.

—it was almost time for the seal to be broken.

It was the old sword Eliane had received from Philip.

No one noticed its glowing radiance.

# Chapter 89

## The Determination of the Saint

Nigel, Douglas, Philip, and I surrounded a table.

After listening to what I said, Douglas was the first to stand up.

“You want to save your former kingdom!?”

Douglas’ words were filled with anger.

It couldn’t be helped. I used to complain to Douglas about my mistreatment.

Apparently, Douglas made a stop my former kingdom once. As to what he said to Claude, that was a mystery to me.

Still, he probably informed Claude about their impending doom.

It might be because of that.

Douglas was unable to accept my words.

“Yes.”

Not taking my eyes off the approaching Douglas, my reply was short.

I was a little scared when Douglas, whom was well-built, narrowed our distance. But I decided to stand my ground.

*“You want to save the kingdom that once banished you!?”*

*“Are you stupid or what?!”*

I could guess what Douglas was about to say.

For a while, the two of us glared at each other.

“...Why?”

Douglas was the first to speak.

He folded his arms and sat down on a chair. He seemed unconvinced.

“I also believe saving that kingdom is an act of foolishness. I don’t want to see Claude ever again. However, even though the archdemon, Baldur, is gone, if left alone, that kingdom will soon fall into ruin.”

While most were critical of me, some were kind to me.

After being treated horribly by Claude, I decided to ditch the kingdom by myself.

To just return to that kingdom... it did sound crazy.

However...

“...I, I can’t abandon that kingdom, not by any means. The incident with Baldur helped me realize this.”

With the help of Nigel, Douglas, Philip, and Vincent, Baldur was defeated.

But my former kingdom had no means to fight against demons.

If more demons were to attack, that kingdom would be finished.

When I pictured the innocent getting massacred, my chest filled with pain.

“Nigel seems to already be aware of this.”

Douglas turned to Nigel.

“...I am.”

“Why don’t you stop her, then? Do you know what kind of treatment Eliane suffered in that kingdom?”

“Of course I tried to stop her, but she refused to listen.”

Nigel shrugged.

“I believe Eliane properly thought this through. I want Eliane to do what’s best for her.”

“*Tch!* What a stubborn pair of husband and wife you are!”

*Huh!?*

Certainly, Nigel was my fiancé, but we aren’t formally married, yet!

Because of Douglas, my face was bright red.

“But Nigel and I alone aren’t enough to save that kingdom.”

I spoke while suppressing my embarrassment.

“Douglas... and also Philip—I want your to help me if possible. That’s the reason for this meeting.”

“It’s a wise decision. There are still some demons who’re stronger than Baldur. Even if you’re the saint, dealing with all of them would be impossible. It’s no surprise that you want to rely on our power, however...”

Douglas left his seat and stood before me.

His thick chest felt intimidating.

Suddenly, Douglas grabbed my collar and brought his face closer.

“D, Douglas!? What the hell are you—”

Nigel tried to help, but I stopped him. I stared back into Douglas’ eyes.

Usually, I’d be embarrassed. But at the moment, there was something urgent.

“No matter how much you requested me, I won’t save that kingdom. Besides, why do I have to help a kingdom that has no relation to me?”

“Of course, it’s only natural for you to think so. If Douglas refuses to help me, then it can’t be helped. I won’t force you.”

In good faith, I conveyed my thoughts to Douglas.

—I didn’t think I was saying anything crazy.

Was it my nature as a saint?

It was just impossible for me to leave that kingdom alone.

Until now, I had turned a blind eye towards that kingdom.

After all, when I thought about those whom were suffering, my chest hurt.

But, after witnessing Baldur’s cruelty, I couldn’t ignore it anymore.

“...Haa.”

Douglas sighed deeply and slowly let go of me.

“Okay, I will lend you my power.”

“Really?!”

“Of course, but, if you dare attempt to return to that kingdom and leave Lynchgiham, I won’t forgive you?! I also like this kingdom. I have no intention of returning to that kingdom.”

“Yes, of course. I’m ready to spend the rest of my life here.”

When he heard my respond, Nigel smiled.

Nigel actually said the same thing last night.

Still, that was just preposterous.

I wanted to save my former kingdom due to my selfishness.

I didn’t feel like leaving Lynchgiham and returning to that place.

“I’m sorry for treating you roughly, I wanted to make sure you were prepared.”

“No problem, although it hurt a little, I was able to see your face up close. Your eyelashes are longer than I expected.”

“Gahaha, you always say the most interesting things! That’s why I’m motivated to help you!”

Douglas laughed boisterously.

“But... what about the Spirit King? Hasn’t he been terribly quiet until now?”

Douglas mentioned Philip.

Up to that point, Philip had been quietly listening with his eyes closed.

“I have a lot of things to consider.”

He opened his eyes.

“Well, are you against Eliane saving her former kingdom?”

“No, I agree. But more than respecting her hopes, it’s for Lynchgiham... if we don’t save that kingdom, the world will perish. I don’t want that. As such, we have to do something about that kingdom.”

“Huh?”

Douglas tilted his neck.

Even if that kingdom was destroyed, it was unlikely that the demons would invade other kingdoms.

Baldur was a special case. The demons were usually cautious. Unless they had a good chance of winning, they wouldn’t just invade any kingdom.

...What was Philip implying?

“I thought they had given up long ago... but after hearing Baldur’s story, that doesn’t seem to be the case...”

“Baldur’s story?”

While I was wondering, Philip continued.

“They’re planning to revive the Demon King.”

# Chapter 90

## The Original Saint

“To resurrect... the Demon King?”

Nigel tilted his head.

In response to his question, Philip continue to speak.

“A long time ago, a demon army existed in this world. It was led by none other than the Demon King. For generations, they warred against other races. The Demon King was so strong, no one could stand up against him. In the end, all the races joined hands to defeat the Demon King. That was how the present world come to be.”

“Wait a minute, Philip. I have never heard of such a thing. Did that really happen?”

“I thought Eliane knew, but she apparently didn’t.”

Philip was astonished.

“Well, it can’t be helped. After all, it has been a thousand years... In fact, it’s a folklore that has been passed down from generation to generation among the spirits. But it seems that humans are unaware of it.”

The battle with the Demon King... I wondered if it actually happened.

“Douglas, did you know about it?”

“It happened before I was born. I’ve heard of it, somewhat. I don’t think it’s that old, honestly. In fact, I thought it was a fairy tale spun by the elderly.”

Douglas exhaled.

Apparently, Douglas also didn’t know.

“Why would the Demon King be resurrected? Why now?”

“Umu.”



Philip nodded and resumed the story.

“After a long battle, the humans decided to seal the Demon King. It’s because they thought they couldn’t win even if they went all-out. The Demon King was thus sealed in a certain place. That place should be the capital of your former kingdom.”

“Is that true!?”

I had never heard of any of it. I could only listen.

“Who could’ve sealed such a mighty Demon King?”

“The saint.”

Philip answered.

“To be precise, the ‘Original Saint.’ Hence why, the saints, who have inherited the blessing of the goddess, have been protecting that kingdom for generations...”

“The ‘Original Saint’... for her to have been able to seal the Demon King, she must have been powerful, right?”

“Indeed. Eliane seems to only be able to protect the entirety of Lynchgiham with her barrier. The Original Saint is said to have been able to shield the entire world. Well, Eliane’s skill is also astounding...”

The Original Saint...

As Philip said, there was a limit to my barrier.

Therefore, when I was banished, the barrier surrounding my former kingdom broke.

As of the present, there was a barrier over Lynchgiham.

Currently, that was the maximum range of my barrier.

“The Original Saint was able to shield the entire world...”

...She must have had tremendous magical power.

“Well, I don’t know how true it is. It happened long time ago. There may be some dramatization.”

“That may be the case... at any rate, the power of the saints, including mine, has maintained the peace of not only that kingdom, but also the world...”

“...Yes, but...”

Philip’s face darkened.

“Eliane has been banished. As such, there’s no way for her to protect the kingdom. Then, Baldur invaded, and the rest is history. Up until recently, the demons have attempted to revive the Demon King and invade that kingdom. But with the power of the saint and a dragon residing nearby, those attempts have been foiled.”

Douglas looked very proud.

“But... these days, there hasn’t been any sign of them. I thought they had given up on resurrecting the Demon King.

Apparently, they haven’t. If the Demon King is resurrected, it won’t just be the kingdom, the whole world will also be caught in a whirlpool of turmoil. As such, I respect Eliane’s idea.”

Philip finished talking.

Apparently, the situation was much direr than we thought.

I was a little resentful at not being taught such an important thing as the saint. Although, my predecessor might not have known about it, either.

The atmosphere became heavier at once.

“This doesn’t seem to be a problem only involving a kingdom anymore... to protect Lynchgiham... no, in order to protect the world’s peace, we must prevent the resurrection of the Demon King at all cost.”

Nigel stared at Philip.

“But, how do the demons intend to achieve that? Are they going to do something?”

“I don’t know, but archdemon Baldur mentioned something about not having enough magical power. Perhaps he intended to makeup for it through human sacrifices. They failed to achieve the help of spirits, after all. As such, I don’t think they can revive the Demon King

immediately. Regardless, it's still urgent. We should take action as soon as possible."

I didn't mean to relax, but listening to Philip fired me up.

Nigel hit both of his cheeks. "Alright! Tomorrow, let's leave immediately! We must head to the kingdom and prevent the resurrection of the Demon King!"

There were many things I didn't understand.

The resurrection of the Demon King... the Original Saint...

...But I couldn't afford to relax.

Having listened so far, I came up with an idea.

For that reason, we must head to the kingdom right away.

I smiled at Douglas.

"I'd like to, but my village is still in a state of confusion because of Baldur, as such..."

"Yes, I know. You should return to your village at once. Once they've calmed down, I'd be happy if you could come and help us."

"I'm sorry."

Philip gave an apologetic bow.

"Alright, it's decided. We'll fulfil Eliane's wishes and prevent the resurrection of the Demon King. For the time being, let's head to the kingdom. Once we're ready, I shall inform everyone of the details."

To Nigel's words, we all nodded.

# Chapter 91

## The Future Princess

“Milady, will you not be departing tomorrow? There is no need to help us.”

The chef was very concerned.

“This is no trouble. It’s just... I cannot stay still.”

“But...”

“I am doing this because I want to. Or, could it be, am I in the way?”

“That’s not it! Milady is certainly skillful! Moreover, there’s not enough manpower. As such, you’re a great help!”

The chef hurriedly waved it off.

I understood the chef’s worry.

But... cooking was my hobby. Besides, when I thought how everyone else was doing their best for me, I couldn’t help myself.

*Alright! Just a little more!*

*Cheer up, me!*

I grabbed a rice ball.

—there was a reason for this.

“Tomorrow, we will depart. We have to prepare immediately. The distance from here to the capital of that kingdom is quite far.”

After our discussion ended, Nigel said such.

“I see. I’m really sorry for making you rush like this, Nigel.”

“It’s no problem. For the sake of the world, we must hurry. I have to do what I can.”

Nigel tried to act strong before me.

Despite how exhausted he was, he was patient so as to not worry me.

I had to reward him for his dedication.

“Immediately send a messenger to knight captain Adolf. Tell him to prepare equipment and rations. Even if we can replenish some on the way, there’s no such thing as overpreparing.”

“Food is important.”

If we were to fight hungry, we would never achieve a good result.

*‘ Eat three meals a day and get enough sleep.’*

What would happen if I were to hurry to the royal capital without sleep or eating was quite obvious.

“The cooks will have to work until late into the night. Therefore, preparations will have to start now...”

Nigel said in a worried voice.

As expected, three delicious meals a day was necessary. Whether or not it was going to be a long trip, I couldn’t say. At the very least, I wanted to cook a delectable meal.

“If so, I’ll help!”

“E, Eliane?”

“Yes, my hobby is cooking!”

“I know that, but, is that alright? Since Eliane will also be departing tomorrow, shouldn’t you be resting!?”

Before Nigel could finish speaking, I ran towards the kitchen.

“Hmm... I’d like to bring something delicious if possible.”

While holding the rice ball, I muttered that.

“Well, it can’t be helped. We don’t have enough time. The dish has to be as simple as possible. Still, it’s our job to cook delicious food.”

“That’s right.”

Regardless, no matter how urgent it was, we were lacking in

manpower!

Maybe it was going to be an all-nighter... No, because I was departing tomorrow, I had to sleep. But... the cooks would have a hard time...

While thanking everyone, I held a rice ball.

“Big sis! Cecily will also help!”

A cute little girl’s voice rang out.

I turned around and saw Nigel’s little sister—Cecily, the kingdom’s first princess, rushing to us.

“Cecily-chan, will you help me?”

“Yes! Cecily wants to go on the trip too, but big brother stopped Cecily! That’s why, even if a little, Cecily wants to be helpful!”

With that said, Cecily showed a firm posture and tried to make a rice ball.

By the way, I hadn’t told everyone our actual purpose for going to the other kingdom.

After all, if I were to honestly say we intended to prevent the revival of the Demon King, everyone’d be upset.

Of course, the king and his vassals had already been informed.

However, Cecily didn’t know the actual reason.

“Alright, can Cecily-chan help me in making rice ball?”

“Yes! Leave it to me! Ever since big sister taught me, Cecily has been doing her best!”

Cecily reached for the already cooked white rice.

That was right.

After I met Cecily, whenever I had free time, I’d teach her how to cook.

Of course, I hadn’t taught her how to make any complicated dishes, yet.

However, recently, Cecily had become able to make omelets by herself.

It seemed that she'd make a good bride in the future!

...In order to protect that peaceful future, we must prevent the revival of the Demon King at all costs.

“Hot!”

Cecily quickly withdrew her hand.

“Cecily-chan, that's dangerous! First, you have to rinse your hands...”

“I see...”

“Did you burn yourself?”

“I'm alright! This time, Cecily won't fail!”

Cecily rinsed her hands and grabbed the rice.

*Nigi nigi!*

With her tiny hands, Cecily started to make a rice ball. It was such an adorable sight.

“Good, Cecily-chan! That's how you do it!”

“I'll do my best!”

I laughed at what Cecily said. After all, she had imitated my tone.

Although I was busy, I enjoyed making rice balls...

“Big sister...”

“Huh...?”

Keeping her eyes on the rice ball, Cecily spoke.

“Will tomorrow's trip be dangerous?”

“...Eh?”

Cecily said something unexpected, she caught me off guard.

*‘That's not the case.’* was what I was trying to say...

“The truth is, Cecily already knows. Cecily really wants to stop big sister, but... Cecily’s selfishness will only bother big sister... there’s only one thing Cecily can say—please return safely.”

...I was surprised.

I thought Cecily was still a child, but she was apparently more mature than I expected.

She was truly the future princess.

I might have been looking down on her a little.

Hence why.

“...I understand. Thank you, Cecily. I’ll definitely return with everyone. Afterwards, let’s go on a picnic with everyone and eat plenty of rice balls.”

Treating Cecily like a woman, I answered seriously.

“Yes! Cecily is looking forward to it! Cecily will do her best until then!”

I had to do my best to meet her expectations!

Thinking that, I worked faster at making rice balls.



# Chapter 92

## What I Forgot in the Kingdom

Midnight.

“I was so busy making rice balls, I failed to realize it had gotten this late...”

I went to the castle’s rooftop balcony to gaze at the moon.

The full moon hung in the night sky.

I felt nostalgic.

“...Back then, on this balcony, Nigel asked if I was the saint...”

It felt like yesterday.

*“I want to spend more time with you.”*

His expression as he passionately held my shoulders, trying to persuade me, came to mind.

— *Now that I think about it...*

Not even in my wildest fantasies had I dreamed of becoming Nigel’s fiancée. After all, he was such a nice man.

In the beginning, I couldn’t stomach the fact that I was his fiancée and would brood alone.

“If it were the past me, I’d surely return to my former kingdom without telling anybody.”

I made a bitter smile.

In truth, I wasn’t strong enough to save my former kingdom.

Also, rushing off on my own would trouble Nigel.

“Have I matured?”

...I couldn’t say.

However, compared to the time I was still in my former kingdom, my way of thinking and perspective had changed considerably.

Surely, the past me wouldn't have even considered saving that kingdom in the slightest.

"Fufufu, what am I doing here? Am I perhaps feeling sentimental? To prepare for tomorrow, I need to sleep early."

It was when I was about to return.

"Eliane?"

A voice came from behind.

I turned around and found Nigel.

"Nigel, what's wrong? It is already late. Tomorrow, we need to rise early."

"That should be my line... how about you? Are you alright?"

"Of course I am."

Nigel stood beside me and rested his arms on the balcony's railing.

"A lot of time was spent preparing for tomorrow. The excitement is keeping me from falling asleep. Hence, I was thinking of staring at the moon until I recovered my peace..."

"What a coincidence, I cannot sleep, either..."

"Haha, that's very much like you, Eliane."

"The same goes for you."

We shared a laugh.

"This place reminds me of the old days..."

"Indeed. There was a full moon at that time, the night when you proposed to me. It feels like the moon is always watching over us."

"I feel the same."

I felt comfortable simply talking to Nigel.

Was it because we connected?

When it came to conversing with him, I did not need to think much.

It was a stark contrast with Claude.

For a moment, I recalled Claude.

“Eliane, could it be, you are reluctant to go to your former kingdom?”

“Eh?”

*What an odd question.* I turned to stare at him.

“What makes you think that?”

“No... it’s just that when I look at Eliane’s expression, I get that impression. The kingdom that exiled you, surely, you detest the thought of returning there?”

“Certainly, that is true...”

I held a finger under my mouth and fell into thought.

“Yes, I am reluctant to step foot in that kingdom. If I do so, surely, I’ll relive the painful memories of that time.”

“That’s only natural. That kingdom was terrible to you.”

“If I were to meet Claude, that would also be awkward. I would not know what to say.”

I shrugged.

“Then, why did Eliane decide to save that kingdom? I have heard your reasons, but it still doesn’t add up for me...”

“Hmm...”

There was also the issue regarding the revival of the Demon King—but, I only learned about that, recently, after being told by Philip.

As for the other reasons—

—The idea that the people living in that kingdom were invaded by the demons pained my heart.

—as long as I bore the title of the saint, turning a blind eye towards that kingdom’s demise felt wrong.

I could come up with as many reasons as I wanted.

However.

“...Maybe, there is no true reason. It is merely something I believe anyone would do.”

“I see. That is a very Eliane-like reason. But, perhaps, you’re trying to find something in that kingdom?”

“Something?”

What would I want to find?

I hadn’t left anything behind in that kingdom...

As if he had read my thoughts, Nigel resumed.

“It’s probably vague, but I’m sure you forgot something in that kingdom. That’s why, you are trying to find it.”

“...That may be the case.”

Although I responded like that, I still couldn’t wrap my mind around Nigel’s words.

When it came to my former kingdom, I had no regrets.

However, if it was about something I had left behind...

Nigel’s following words surprised me.

“I hope that kingdom is still safe. If it has collapsed, you may not be able to find what you’re looking for.”

“Certainly.”

If it was too late...

The thought constricted my chest with pain.

However, judging from what Philip said, it seemed that Baldur was trying to revive the Demon King by sacrificing those people...

...If so, it was highly possible none of them had died, yet.

“...There’s also the matter regarding Claude and Leticia...”

Because of them, I was condemned as a fake saint. Afterwards, was the annulment of my engagement. My banishment followed soon after.

The entire time, Leticia was grinning as she hugged his arm.

To be honest, I only had bad impressions of her. I didn't want to see her again.

However, going to that kingdom meant that we would inevitably see each other.

I couldn't turn back anymore.

"Eliane, are you anxious?"

"Well... I don't know what to say."

*"Who asked for your help!?"*

If Claude were to tell me that, what do I do? He was that kind of person, after all.

...When I thought about that, my anxiety swelled.

"Eliane?"

Was it because of my gloomy face?

Suddenly, Nigel spread his arms and embraced me tightly.

"—!"

I was at a loss for words.

Him doing that made my anxiety vanish as though it were a lie...

"If you're anxious, you can always talk to me. I won't be bothered, at all."

"Yes, thank you."

The nights were getting colder and I wasn't even wearing a jacket. As such, I should have been freezing.

Except, I was enveloped by Nigel's warmth. I wished the embrace would last forever.

It was such a pleasant moment.

“...Let’s head to bed, soon.”

Nigel released me.

“Once we return, let’s discuss our wedding. It’s about time for everyone to acknowledge Eliane. Our engagement shouldn’t remain a secret anymore.”

“Y, yes, Nigel, but you shouldn’t talk about that, especially right now...”

“...Why?” Nigel tilted his head.

A man who promised to marry his lover once he returned from war yet never came home... I had often heard of such stories.

Still, I had promised Cecily—that we’d return safely to Lynchgiham.

I wouldn’t allow any bad outcomes.

I firmly resolved myself.

# Chapter 93

## Let's eat Rice Balls Together

The next day, I woke up a bit earlier than usual.

As soon as I was ready, I left for the city's gate.

"This may have been sudden but thank you for all your support until now."

Nigel was giving a speech to the knights.

"As of the present, the royal capital of our neighboring kingdom is being ruled by the demons. We have no obligation to save that kingdom, but we cannot claim that the demons won't invade us. As such, I have decided to aid them."

Most likely, everyone had already been informed. Regardless, Nigel took the liberty to explain it once again.

As Nigel spoke, the knight captain, Adolf, raised his hand.

"We'll be facing the demons, as such, it'll be a fierce battle. Are you sure that our number is enough?"

Only appointed knights could go to the kingdom of Verclaim.

—Adolf must have received an explanation about that matter in advance from Nigel, too...

Nigel was clarifying to avoid any misunderstandings. Adolf's question was probably part of the script.

Upon hearing to Adolf's inquiry, Nigel gave a resolute answer.

"I am. The leader of those demons, Baldur, has already been defeated. Hence why, our chances of victory should be high."

"Furthermore, there seems to be a lot of undead. However, they shouldn't pose a threat. After all, we have a lot of holy water in stock."

Adolf nodded.

“But even if the possibility that the damage will spread to Lynchgiham exists, why can’t we just send our soldiers?”

“Yes, I have also considered that. However, I intend to impose some adjustments to benefit Lynchgiham. Once the safety of the royal capital is secured, His Majesty the King shall follow us there. Our aid was never meant to be free.”

Everyone was surprised at the king being mentioned.

The rescue of Verclaim was such an important operation, even the king decided to appear.

Adolf shrugged his shoulders.

“I see, I now understand everything. I therefore entrust my life to you.”

I grinned.

The trust between the two was so apparent.

“Alright, let’s begin right away. This is an urgent matter. Before that, Eliane, do you have anything to say?”

“M-me!?”

The focus suddenly shifted while I was shocked.

The knights seemed to be waiting for me to speak. Shrugging them off didn’t seem possible.

*What do I do, now...?*

I had never had an opportunity to address such a large crowd.

“A, ahem...”

I took a step forward and cleared my throat.

“Thank you for joining us today, everyone.”

It felt like I was about to start a party...

“As you may already know, I can use healing and barrier magic. I will not allow anyone to die. Therefore, everyone, please prioritize your lives. Life is important!”



Everyone in my surroundings started to cheer.

That was good.

Apparently, my speech was successful.

We left the city.

We departed from Lynchgiham in carriages.

“It’s about time for lunch.”

Nigel, who was in the same carriage as me, said that.

“Then, let’s have lunch, soon? I’m starting to feel hungry...”

“Alright...”

Nigel gathered everyone to have lunch.

I presented the rice balls and sandwiches I made last night to Nigel.

“They look similar to the ones made by the chefs... Eliane helped with making them, right?”

“That’s right.”

“I see. Then, I’ll eat them right away.”

Nigel bit into the rice ball.

“How delicious!”

Nigel’s eyes beamed like a child.

“But... what is this sour thing? What is this red fruit in the middle?”

“It’s called *umeboshi*. In Eastern countries, they are often put in rice balls. Do you not like it?”

“No, it’s really good. *Umeboshi* goes quite well with rice.”

*Pakupaku.*

Nigel ate the rice ball with delight.

I also tried one.

I wondered if they were actually tasty...

...As soon as I put it in my mouth, the softness of the white rice gently enveloped my mouth.

The sourness of the pickled plum made me frown for a moment, but the taste gradually spread across my mouth.

The pickled plum was nutritious.

Slowly but surely, the exhaustion from being rocked by the carriage was washed away.

*...It tastes amazing...*

Apparently, Nigel wasn't the only one. Everyone was enjoying them.

"What is this!? How can a mere rice ball be this good?!"

"I never thought I'd have such a delicious meal before a fight!"

"Did Eliane make this...? Why does the food made by beautiful women always taste so good!"

Voices of admiration rose up from my surroundings.

Everyone seemed liked it.

"I want Douglas to try some, too..."

Nigel said with a rice ball in one hand.

"I agree."

"Once we reach the royal capital, I will give on to him. Douglas is the key to this operation. He should at least be granted that much."

I agreed with Nigel's words.

As Nigel had said—Douglas was been dispatched first.

By this time, he should be rampaging within the royal capital.

"I wonder if he's safe..."

"He should be, he's Douglas after all. Don't worry."

As I worried about Douglas, our journey ensued.

# Chapter 94

## The Unchanging Feeling of Love

□ Side: Claude

—He had made an error in judgement.

While trapped in a prison, Claude lamented.

*It's a mistake to banish Eliane. If I hadn't exiled her, none of this would have happened.*

But it was too late.

Before he could realize that, he had wasted a lot of time.

At first, he refused to admit his failure. He wanted to believe that what happened was inevitable—with, or without Eliane.

That he wasn't wrong.

That it was Eliane's fault. If she had put in more effort in enticing him, Claude wouldn't be confined in such a narrow place.

Claude recalled Eliane's statement again and again, that ruin would befall that kingdom once she was gone.

At first, he thought that she was spouting nonsense.

After all, Eliane's power should have been fake. She was only threatening him to keep from getting banished.

It was pathetic of her to act like that.

But, as of the present, he had no choice but to concede that many unfortunate incidents had befallen him ever since Eliane disappeared.

Therefore, Eliane was the true saint.

*Why did I expel Eliane?*

In his current situation where he was imprisoned and rendered useless, Claude had no choice but to look back. He had to vent though he hated it.

*I... was probably lonely.*

He wanted to be the center of attention for women.

He wanted to mess with more women.

Eliane wasn't one such woman.

She had refused his invitation to bed because that weren't yet married.

She told him that as a prince, he had to mind his behavior.

Also, because she was the saint, she was busy all the time, neglecting Claude.

*No... maybe she tried to love me in her own way...*

However, it was far from the ideal image of a lover that Claude had envisioned.

Claude had met Leticia when he was having a frustrating day.

*"I, I think I'm in love with you..."*

Leticia was sweet to Claude. Her obedience was also cute.

Now that he thought about it, he envisioned his ideal woman to be as loving as his mother.

Moreover, Leticia would always depend on Claude.

No man would be unhappy being relied upon by a woman as cute as Leticia.

*"I can't open the lid of this bottle, Claude, will you help me?"*

Considering that he was a prince, and she was a mere count's daughter, it was uncouth of her.

Yet still, Leticia, who relied on him for such a trivial matter, was cute.

There was also the decisive event that made Claude annul his engagement with Eliane and decide to be with Leticia.

It happened on a snowy day.

Although the fireplace was lit, the day was still chilly in of itself.

Leticia knitted a sweater for Claude who was bad with cold.

*“Wow, it suits Your Highness very well! Do you like it?”*

Leticia’s face beamed as Claude wore the sweater.

Honestly, the sweater he received from Leticia was nothing compared to the high-quality ones he always wore.

Not to mention, threads were frayed in some places.

While the material was first class, the sewing was subpar. As such, it couldn’t repel the harsh winter cold.

However.

*“Thank you, Leticia, for knitting it especially for me.”*

Claude was happy and embraced Leticia. She had done her best to knit it for him. Her hands proved it.

Unaccustomed to knitting, her hands were full of scratches.

*When I saw those hands, I was determined to protect Leticia for the rest of my life...*

Later, when Claude wore the sweater, an aide advised him to, *“Stop wearing such an unpresentable thing.”*

Naturally, he punished that aide. But... he probably overdid it.

*It’s getting colder... I want to wear that sweater...*

“Claude...”

When Claude was reminiscing about the old days, he heard the uneasy voice of Leticia.

Leticia snuggled up to Claude, peering at his face.

“What’s wrong, Claude?”

*“I’m sorry, everything is my fault... forgive me for being so foolish and ugly...”*— Leticia would often apologize to him.

However.

“What are you saying? None of this is your fault. No matter what, I’ll

be by your side. I'll protect you, even if it costs me my life."

Claude embraced Leticia.

Seeing such a situation, the demons watching over them laughed.

"Hahaha! How can you still love such a grotesque woman? I thought I'd be able to enjoy myself a little since she is a woman, but she was actually this repulsive! Well, for an idiot like you, such an ugly woman is probably suitable."

Claude was angry and involuntarily glared at the demons.

"Huh? *What?*"

However, his fear for the demons was greater, and he soon withdrew his gaze.

*No, I have to hold back... even if I resist, I'd just be killed... I can't let any harm befall Leticia...*

Claude gritted his teeth, trying to calm his anger.

For some reason, Leticia lost her beauty.

However, Claude's love for her hadn't changed at all.

On the contrary, when he looked at Leticia in such a powerless state, his drive to protect her got stronger.

"Leticia, I will find a cure for you."

"...There's no use... only a true saint can heal me..."

It was when Leticia made that remark.

*Dogooon—!*

A deafening sound echoed.

"W, what happened?!"

"A dragon, a dragon has invaded this kingdom!"

The demons rushed out in a hurry.

The entire castle shook, and Claude pulled Leticia into an embrace to protect her.

“A dragon, why would a dragon...!?”

It seemed that the dragon had returned to destroy the kingdom.

*Even though demons have already invaded... now, a dragon, too. It seems that this kingdom will end...*

Claude was consumed by despair.

*...Am I imagining things?*

Judging from the noise, the dragon seemed to be battling the demons.

It was as if the dragon was trying to crush the demons for the sake of protecting the kingdom...

*No, don't be so full of yourself... there's the dragon has no reason to protect this kingdom...*

Screams and angry cries flew all around.

Claude reassured Leticia by gently stroking her back.

# Chapter 95

## The Dragon Once Again Descends Upon the Kingdom

□ Side: Douglas

“I’ve had enough of these weaklings...”

Some were running away, while the others attempted to confront the dragon.

Taking it all in, Douglas sighed.

*“Kakekare!”*

“Why is the dragon attacking!? Didn’t the dragon leave this kingdom!?”

“W, where is Lord Baldur!? Lord Baldur should be able to stand against a dragon like this...”

Currently, Douglas was in a dragon form.

The demons, who couldn’t comprehend Douglas’ muttering, must have been seeing him as a catastrophic disaster.

“Human form isn’t bad, but it’s easier to maneuver in this form.”

With that said, Douglas spewed flames upon a group of demons.

Douglas, soaring high in the sky, looked down at the fleeing demons. He was satisfied with that sight.

“It’s as Nigel and Eliane said—this battle will be over before they can even arrive.”

While burning the demons, Douglas recalled his conversation with Nigel the previous night.

*“Douglas, I want you to go to the royal capital by yourself first.”*

*“Hm? By myself? Aren’t we going to fight together?”*



*“That’s the best choice, but after some consideration, you should be enough to wipe out the remaining demons.”*

Nigel said so.

*“Well, that’s fine with me, but why alone?”*

*“Because by the time we arrive, it’s highly possible they’ll realize their leader’s death. Once that happens, there’s no guarantee they won’t commit a massacre.”*

*“That’s right, but...”*

*“...Eliane doesn’t want anyone to die.”*

Eliane, who stood next to Nigel, nodded.

*“Got it. As always, you’re so naïve.”*

Douglas grinned at Eliane.

*“I’m very aware of my naivety, but... what if they chance upon a method to resurrect the Demon King because we delayed the rescue?”*

*“Well, that’s true. If we waste too much time, that might happen.”*

Douglas was convinced.

*“No way. Douglas, are you scared of a few mere demons?”*

Eliane provoked Douglas. It was unusual for her.

In response, Douglas scoffed. *“Hmph! What did you say? Those demons, they’re no match for me! I will burn them into toast before you even arrive!”*

He proudly hit his chest.

If he didn’t burn them, he wouldn’t deserve to be called a dragon.

*“Oh, of course, I won’t tell you to fight empty-handed. Here, take this.”*

At the thing Nigel handed over, Douglas smirked.

That was the end of their conversation.

Compared to Eliane and the others who were traveling in horse-drawn carriage, Douglas, who could fly in the sky, arrived much earlier.

Being able to carry all of them would have been nice... But that might be dangerous. Eliane could be thrown off.

In the first place, Douglas was unaccustomed to carrying people.

“Fighting the demons while excluding the humans is quite difficult...”

The demons weren’t the only ones who scattered beneath his sight.

There were also the king’s people whom were being held captive by the demons.

With the arrival of the dragon, keeping the people imprisoned was impossible for the demons.

The humans who saw Douglas was terrified and ran away.

“I seem to have no choice but to use the item Nigel gave me...”

Douglas took out something from his storage magic.

It was a small vial containing a liquid.

In fact, he had over 100 vials containing the same liquid.

As soon as it appeared out of nowhere, it burst.

The liquid poured down from high up in sky to the ground.

“What is this!?”

“Holy water!? Did the dragon do this!?”

“Why does the dragon have something like this?! Ouch, ouch, ouch!”

The screams of the demons echoed.

“As I thought, it’s convenient to use the holy water... to come up with such a ridiculous thing, as expected of Eliane.”

As he watched the demons disappear one after another, Douglas thought of Eliane.

That was their secret plan.

Douglas would soar high in the sky and sprinkle holy water throughout the city.

They learned in the previous battle that Baldur had many undead demons.

Originally, slaying such immortal beings would have been difficult. But, with the existence of the holy water, everything became convenient.

“After all, holy water is only harmful against the demons, not the humans. This allows me to defeat the demons without hurting a single human.”

The proof lied with how the demons were disappearing while the humans could only stay agape.

There was no problem, then.

“Kukuku, for me to rely on a manmade item... how ironic.”

The him from before he met Eliane would have consider such an act disgraceful.

However, as of the present, he was different.

“I will use everything that can be used. If I were to prioritize my pride and die in this war, I won’t be able to boast.

Nothing is as pathetic as a loser’s excuse.”

Moreover, if Douglas were to be defeated, Eliane and the others would be inconvenienced.

*I’m not fighting solely for my own sake... I have someone to protect—  
—therefore, I won’t let myself be defeated.*

For that reason, he was happy to use the holy water.

“*Dear* demons, have you been enjoying yourselves while I was present? Now is the time for you to understand who is the strongest!”

Douglas shouted at the demons whom were at the brink of annihilation.

# Chapter 96

## The Saint Steps Into the Kingdom Once Again

Over the course of a few days, we finally reached the royal capital.

“It seems that Douglas has defeated the demons.”

Upon arriving, we saw craters and rubble everywhere. The buildings had been trashed. The damage was enormous.

However, I didn’t see any demons.

“You’re right. It’s as you foresaw, Eliane.”

“Most importantly...”

...It wasn’t like I was worried about Douglas. But maybe I was, a little.

“By the way, Douglas...”

I looked around.

“Have you arrived?”

A man dashing descended from a tall building and landed before us.

It was no other than Douglas.

“Douglas, are you safe? Did you suffer any injuries?”

“Hmph! Fighting those weaklings? They were but low-ranking demons. Moreover, I have that convenient tool called holy water. Don’t worry.” Douglas said with a laugh.

Seeing the energetic Douglas, I held my chest in relief.

“It seems that the royal capital has been thrown into chaos...”

The royal capital was nothing like I remembered.

The whole city had been thrashed. I felt anxious.

It couldn’t be helped... Although they had been defeated by Douglas, demons did recently invade that kingdom.

It also couldn't be helped that the residents were uneasy.

"Anyway, let's go meet His Majesty the King. Under normal circumstances, we wouldn't be granted an audience with him. But now, that shouldn't be the case."

Nigel instructed us.

Although the demons in the city had been annihilated, there were still some left.

*A second demon faction...* it was easy to imagine a third wave coming.

We had to devise countermeasures immediately...

"Hey! What are the people of Lynchgiham doing here?!"

When I was in thought, a man who appeared to be a knight came screaming at us.

"Are you... a knight of this kingdom?"

When Nigel asked, the man nodded.

"Then that makes it easy. I'm Nigel Lynchgiham, the prince of Lynchgiham. It may be sudden, but I request an audience with His Majesty the King."

"Hmph! Don't lie! I don't know your true goal, but there's no way you're a prince! Get out of this city right now!"

The knight waved him off.

The other knights also gathered in front of us, probably because of the commotion.

"But, that coat of arms... that's surely from Lynchgiham. Why are you here? What are your intentions?"

"It's obvious! With the royal capital immensely weakened by the demons, Lynchgiham decided to invade us!"

"We are the swords and the shields of this kingdom! If you dare come even one step closer towards this city, we won't let you go!"

At once, they all spat curses.

They threatened us with their swords and spears.

Even so, they didn't immediately attack us. The reason for that was because they knew they couldn't win.

The weapons and armor of the knights were in tatters. I didn't think they could put up a good fight.

"Well, that's a natural response... I didn't think we'd be trusted that easily." Nigel shrugged.

It was as Nigel had said in the carriage—it would be more difficult to convince the people than to dispose of the demons.

After being invaded by the demons, their wariness had increased.

In such a state, if knights of a neighboring kingdom were to appear, it was only natural that they would lift their swords.

"Nigel, shouldn't we just break through them?"

Douglas asked Nigel while clenching his fist.

"...Well, I don't want to aggravate them more than I already have. However, as long as I speak in good faith, surely, they'd understand."

"I don't think so? They'll just turn a deaf ear to our words. It's also unlikely we'll get to meet the king because these oh-so-loyal knights will hamper us."

"That's right..."

Nigel was at a standstill.

...Was there no choice but to break through?

However, I didn't want to injure them, especially after they had suffered the devastating demon attack...

When I was thinking of what to do...

"Eliane!"

I heard a familiar voice!

"Lower your weapons. You're standing before the saint."

Hearing the man's exclamation, the knights lowered their swords to the ground, albeit they were still confused.

The knights created a path for that man to approach us.

"Klaus!"

It was the knight captain—Klaus.

He was one of a few who understood me in that kingdom. Even when I was exiled, Klaus took my side.

Klaus walked forward, and when he was finally before me, he knelt.

"It has been a long time, Saint. It is I, Klaus."

"It has. I am glad that you are safe, Klaus. Although, I don't feel that I have the right to speak such words..."

"That is my line. I'm delighted that the saint has decided to step into this land once again."

Klaus kept his head down as he spun those meticulous lines.

After seeing Klaus for the first time in a long while, I felt like crying.

But I had no time to immerse myself in the reunion.

"Klaus... believe it or not, we want to save this kingdom."

"..."

Klaus silently listened to my story.

"You might think that as outsiders, it's an outrageous thing to say. However, let me tell you this, that is not the case. Will you not let us meet His Majesty?"

I honestly thought I'd be denied.

As I had said many times, Klaus understood me. Surely, it wouldn't go down *too* badly...

However, more than anyone else, Klaus valued discipline.

No matter how much I asked, I didn't think meeting the king would be easy.

However.

“...I understand. I believe in you. I shall inform the others. Please proceed to the royal castle.”

Klaus extended his hand in the direction of the castle.

“Eh?! Is it really alright?”

“Yes. If anyone complains, I will personally remove that person. I shan’t forgive anyone who dares block your path.”

“W, well, there’s no need to go that far. If you actually do that, you’ll be in deep water, Klaus...”

“I’m just joking.”

Klaus put a finger over his mouth.

Because he spoke with a straight face, I was fooled...

...No, even now, I didn’t believe that he was joking.

Well, since it was Klaus, I had some insight regarding the man.

“Let’s go, Nigel!”

“Alright. Eliane seems to be anxious. Still, it seems that not everyone in this kingdom is your enemy.”

“Indeed, Klaus is a dependable man.”

After hearing what Klaus had said, the other knights, who were initially hostile, were confused, but otherwise let us be.

No one tried to hinder our way.

When we were about to pass Klaus.

“Gahaha! It’s been a long time since I last meet such a strong man.”

“Who are you?”

Douglas had an exchange with Klaus.

Klaus tilted his neck. He didn’t seem to know who Douglas was.

If what Douglas said was true, he had stopped by the kingdom before.



Probably, during that time, they had meet.

“Nigel.”

Adolf beckoned to Nigel from behind.

“It seems that we can resolve this peacefully, after all. I thought there might be a fight.”

“That’s right. It’s all thanks to Eliane.”

“Even so... Eliane was called the ‘Saint’, what did he mean—”

“— *let us go.*”

Nigel shrugged without changing his expressions.

I was probably approaching the limit. I wondered how long could I hide the fact that I was the saint.

# Chapter 97

## Thank You

“I see, both His Majesty the King and His Highness Claude have been imprisoned within the castle dungeon.”

While walking on the road towards the royal castle, I asked Klaus about the current state of the royal capital.

“Indeed.”

Klaus agreed.

“We immediately thought of rescuing them, but... there demons also reside the castle. As such, rescuing them proved to be difficult.”

“I see.”

When I nodded, Klaus continued.

“However, hearing the story of the saint, it seems that thanks to you, the demons in the royal capital have been wiped out.

We can now rescue the king and the prince.”

In truth, Klaus must had been dying to save the king and the prince. He must have wanted to act even if it were to cost him his life.

Klaus was that kind of person, after all.

Thanks to Douglas, the demons were successfully annihilated.

For a dragon to suddenly come to the kingdom just to slay the demons... everyone must had been confused.

Therefore, there was no way for Klaus and the others to know that the demons had been defeated for sure.

Klaus was a serious person.

He must had felt more regretful about the situation than anyone else, and be overwhelmed with despair.

“...”

“Eliane? You seem gloomy, are you alright?”

Nigel was concerned for me.

“N, no, I’m alright... but, when I think of meeting Claude once again, I’m a bit hesitant...”

“He’s the one who banished you, after all. When I meet him, I’ll surely utter one or two complaints.”

Nigel shrugged.

I had been prepared for it.

If I were to rescue that kingdom, meeting Claude would be inevitable.

...When that happened, what should I say to him?

“Gahaha! Eliane, what are you worried about?”

Douglas cheerfully clapped my back.

“It may have not have been the case when you were in this kingdom, but now that you’re in a higher position than Claude, you should act like it. You’re his benefactor, after all.”

“...Is that so?”

Given Claude’s personality, believe that he would change was hard.

However, when I looked at Douglas’ face, I regained some courage.

“If he says anything terrible to you, I’ll crush him. He’ll wish he had went to hell, instead.”

“Indeed, Eliane, you aren’t alone.”

Douglas and Nigel encouraged me.

...That was right.

There was no longer any need for me to endure everything alone.

After all, I had such reliable companions!

When I thought about that, I felt my heart, which had been getting heavier, become a little lighter.

“We’ve arrived.”

Eventually, after following Klaus, we set foot in the royal castle.

I visited the castle for the first time in a while.

However, I didn’t have time to bask in nostalgia.

Guided by Klaus, we went straight to where the dungeon was.

We descended the stairs and reached the basement.

“Eliane?”

Strangely, the first person I met was Claude.

“Claude...”

The name naturally spilled from my mouth.

When I saw Claude, the things he had done to me ran around my head like a magic lantern.

Up until that point in time, various things had happened.

The annulment of our engagement... my banishment...

Afterwards, I met Nigel, the prince of the neighboring kingdom, and got engaged with him. Furthermore, even though I was technically no longer a saint, I saved the spirit village...

As overwhelming as they were, those were some enjoyable days.

On the other side of the prison’s bars was Claude. He looked ragged.

Honestly, I had never seen him like that.

Perhaps, he hadn’t been allowed to eat. He was much thinner than before.

Still, it was kind of ironic that even when he looked like that, I could tell that he was Claude at my first glance.

When I was still staring at him.

“For what purpose did you come... Is it because you want to laugh at me?”

Claude laughed in defeat.

“Ara, the fact that you can still say that proves that you’re fine.”

“...As usual, your words are lacking in praise.”

Claude frowned.

However, I felt that he had changed...

...Well, rather than changing, he probably just lacked the energy to be uncouth.

“Eliane, if you don’t want to talk with him, you don’t have to. Let me take over—”

“—No, there is no problem. Leave Claude to me.”

Nigel said while staring at Claude.

It was easy to run—but I wanted to face Claude head-on.

Feeling my resolve, the others didn’t try to interrupt us.

...I was actually quite surprised.

Even after meeting Claude, I was not filled with resentment.

Was it because he was already powerless?

It seemed that I still had some good in me.

“...It doesn’t seem that I’m welcome, here? Shall I just go home, then? I don’t care about you anymore.”

I spout out a little mischief.

I was curious to see how Claude would react.

Claude wasn’t one to bow to others.

*“I’m the prince of this kingdom, how dare you talk to me like that!”* Was the kind of response I expected from him.

However, Claude’s following words were unexpected.

“—I beg of you! I have a lot of things to say! But, before anything else, can you cure Leticia?”

Claude turned around to the person behind him.

At the end of his line of sight was a woman. That woman was draped with what appeared to be Claude's cloak. She was covered from head to toe. Not only that, she was also sitting in the corner of the room.

Because the dungeon was dim, I didn't notice her presence.

*That's...?*

"...Eliane."

A thin voice leaked from the woman's mouth.

When I heard her voice, I was surprised.

She was Leticia.

There was no mistaking it.

She entered the royal family and was making a move on Claude.

She was also the one who condemned me, which led to my exile. Moreover, she had also given Alberto, the SS-class adventurer, a cursed sword.

"...What happened to her?"

I had a general idea.

However, I pretended to be baffled, and asked Claude.

"I don't know how, but Leticia suffered a terrible injury on her face! No healer can cure her! Can you cure Leticia?"

*Arara...*

Did the thwarted curse ravage Leticia's face?

She hid her face inside the coat, but it must have been pretty terrible.

No healer could cure her?

Of course.

After all, that was the result of her own powerful curse.

Only a swordsman with considerable skill, or a curser—no, even they

might not have been able to cure it.

Only one person in the world could cure her.

“After exiling me, you dare ask me that?”

Even I was surprised at my own, cold, words.

Again, I wondered how Claude would react. Again, I was amazed.

“I beg of you!”

Claude dropped his hands and knees onto the ground and lowered his head.

“There’s no one I can rely on anymore. As long as Leticia is cured, I don’t care what happens to me! At least, Leticia alone must be saved...!”

“...!”

I was naturally befuddled.

—P, prince Claude was bowing!?

That was utterly unthinkable of him.

After a moment, “*Haa...*”

I sighed out.

“I understand. For the time being, let me examine her.”

“R, really!?”

“Yes, but, this prison is in the way. *Douglas!*”

“*Umu.*”

Douglas came forward and forcibly opened the prison. Against someone as powerful as Douglas, it was as if the iron bars were but sugar sculptures.

I stepped inside and approached Leticia.

“...”

“If you don’t want me to see you, you can keep your jacket on.”

“What are you going to do...?”

Her voice was small. It wouldn't be strange if I was the only one who could hear it.

“Cure you, what else?”

“After everything I did? This is the result of my own curse, so why?”

Leticia's wariness grew.

*She...*

I didn't even know what I was doing.

Leticia became like that due to her own actions. Simply speaking, it was her just desserts.

However.

“Because Claude bowed. I can see that he isn't planning anything weird.”

There was no way Claude could do that.

“After seeing that, I realized I'm not heartless enough to abandon you. It isn't for your sake.”

“...I won't apologize.”

Leticia muttered quietly.

“It seems that you, too, are alright.”

I naturally smiled.

Yes, she should be alright.

When I came, I wondered if she'd apologize. After all, she was the one controlling everything behind the scenes.

I had been aware of her despicable nature since long ago, as such, that response befitted her.

“It will be over, soon.”

A gentle light illuminated the center of my palm.



“...You’re healed. You can remove the coat, now.”

Leticia removed the coat and revealed her face.

“Le, Leticia!”

Claude, whom was watching the entire situation, rushed to Leticia.

He then embraced her tight.

“Healed...! Your beautiful face has been restored! You don’t have to be so sad anymore! Thank you, Eliane...! Thank you!”

“Really? My face has returned to its original state...?”

Tears spilled from Claude’s eyes as he hugged Leticia.

The tears stained Leticia’s clothes.

On the other hand, Leticia still looked confused. She was still unsure of what had taken place.

Indeed.

As far as I remembered, that should be Leticia’s face.

No matter how strong the curse was, it was no problem for me.

“*Fufu*, they seem to be on good terms.”

When I saw the two happy people, I laughed without realizing it.

That was the first time Claude had ever thanked me.

# Chapter 98

## Side: Leticia

*—Since my imprisonment here began, how long has it been?*

Leticia was gloomily recounting her days inside the prison.

After the dragon came the demons. Her kingdom had no way to stand against undead demons.

Afterwards, she was imprisoned.

*It seems that I'll die here.*

That was what she thought.

She knew how self-driven she was.

In the beginning, she had also begrudged Eliane. However, overtime, she gradually began to reflect.

*Towards Eliane and the others... I've behaved terribly... no one will come to help me.*

However, Eliane did.

Eliane looked much healthier, and also, happier.

Not only had Leticia created problem for Lynchgiham, she had also tried to murder Eliane.

Yet her plan was foiled. The curse on Alberto's sword was dispelled, and she was struck by a disaster.

She prided herself on her beauty.

Thanks to that, she had gained a lot of things.

Therefore, for such a girl, that sort of outcome was just unbearable.

She also wasn't able to break her own curse.

Eliane was the only one who could.

*Except, there's no way she'll help me...*

Hence, the moment Eliane entered the the prison, a light of hope shone within her heart.

To be honest, Leticia didn't want to meet her.

There was nothing she could say to Eliane.

No matter what she said, there was no way Eliane would forgive Leticia.

Eliane came with Nigel.

Behind her was a man who introduced himself as the dragon. However, Nigel was more eye-catching than him.

He was handsome, after all.

But why?

When she saw him, she wasn't as thrilled as she thought she'd be.

*Well, it doesn't matter anymore...*

Leticia suppressed her heart.

What happened afterwards caused her to doubt her eyes.

“—I beg of you! I have a lot of things to say! But, before anything else, can you cure Leticia?”

*Claude is bowing!?*

That was the first time Leticia had seen Claude behave that way.

Moreover, he did it for her sake and not himself. Given his personality, that was utterly unthinkable.

Eliane was also shocked.

Eliane eyes widened for a moment, before exhaling.

The prison door was destroyed by the man who claimed to be a dragon, and Eliane approached Leticia.

Seeing her, Leticia couldn't help but doubt her.

She wasn't overwhelmed.

It was unlikely that Alberto, whom had been cast aside by Leticia, would speak in her favor.

He'd surely prioritize himself.

Eliane must have discovered that Leticia had attempted to kill her.

*Could it be she is only pretending to cure me but is plotting something else?*

Leticia became even more vigilant.

However, Eliane said that she'd cure Leticia.

Leticia grew even more confused.

*Why? What would she gain by that? She did it just because Claude asked her to? Eliane should hate Claude. She is definitely planning something else!*

Even though Eliane had explained her reason, Leticia was far from convinced.

It might be because of that—

“—...I won't apologize.”

Leticia rebelled a little.

Such was the pride of Leticia who had lived as a sorcerer until then.

She would take advantage of others and cast them aside once they were no longer of use.

Such was the path she had lived on.

She didn't think anyone would forgive her for that, especially not Eliane.

Thus, she didn't expect Eliane would actually cure her.

However.

“It will be over soon.”

Eliane touched Leticia's face.

At that moment, her entire face warmed.

Thus...

“Healed! Your beautiful face has been restored! You don’t need to be so sad anymore...! Thank you, Eliane...! Thank you!”

Claude rushed over and tightly embrace Leticia.

*I’m healed?*

Despite her suspicion, the tears spilling from Claude’s eyes reflected her own face.

Finally, she understood everything.

Eliane had healed her.

Eliane smiled at the sight of Claude embracing Leticia.

Helping Leticia had no merit for Eliane.

*But... for someone like her, probably, that doesn’t matter...*

That girl was the exact opposite of Leticia.

When Leticia wanted something, she’d do everything to achieve it.

She always weighed the pros and cons, and she made sure the former weighed more than the latter.

She had never regretted her way of life.

However, Leticia was suddenly tempted to ponder about her life so far.

That path was a bleak one.

No flowers would bloom along that path.

It was a miserable path, one where only skulls rolled along its side.

*On the other hand, the road that Eliane has treaded on... I wonder if flowers are blooming.*

Eliane was the true saint.

Such a thought entered Leticia’s mind.

At the path Eliane had walked, which was filled with flowers, Leticia felt a little envious.

# Chapter 99

## He Doesn't Seem to be the Same as Before

As Klaus said, the minister and king also seemed to be trapped on that floor.

Fortunately, everyone was safe.

Well, that was probably because it was more convenient that way. Philip mentioned that they would be sacrificed to revive the Demon King. Hence, none of them were killed.

At the beginning, everyone was suspicious. They didn't believe the neighboring kingdom would help them.

However, even so, they still listened to our explanation.

Most likely, it was due to Klaus being present with us. Those people knew they couldn't win against him.

After a while, we all gathered inside the throne room and started our discussion.

"You've made an effort to save our kingdom. I have to thank you."

His Majesty the King spoke with a dignified attitude.

It looked like his holier-than-thou attitude hadn't changed.

Regardless, I had nothing to say to him. I didn't care.

The king sat on the throne, while Claude stood beside him.

Across from him were Nigel, Douglas, and I.

Furthermore, several knights and ministers of the kingdom were also watching.

By the way, Leticia, whose curse had been lifted, wasn't present.

She still seemed to be indignant. As such, she chose to retire to her chamber.

Nigel knelt before the king.

“I’m honored to be in your presence. I’d like to reintroduce myself—I’m Nigel Lynchgiham. You may be His Majesty the King, but it was an emergency. Please forgive my uncouthness.”

“I forgive you.”

The way the king stared at Nigel... it was as if he was sizing him up.

Tension ran inside the throne room.

“I apologize for my bluntness. However, let me get straight to the point—Lynchgiham, what do you want as a reward?”

The king asked.

The main topic had finally been breached.

Up until then, the kingdom had a fairly unilateral diplomacy with other kingdoms. As such, war breaking out wouldn’t be strange.

Hence why, in Lynchgiham, the people—especially Vincent—insisted upon military expansion.

If a kingdom like Verclaim were to be invaded by demons, would another kingdom be willing to help?

...No, at least not without a price.

The king seemed to also understand that. Maybe that was also due to the ministers.

In any case, the king believed no one was willing to help his kingdom for free.

Depending on the request, the kingdom’s predicament would continue.

However, the kingdom, having been made vulnerable by the assault from the demons, no longer had the power to prevent invasion from other kingdoms.

Everyone there must have thought the same. The tension was so thick, it burned as it pricked my skin.

Nigel spoke with a dignified tone while everyone’s attention was on him.



“I only want one thing, for us and the knights of Lynchgiham to remain in this kingdom for a while.”

“...”

The king didn't answer.

Without worry, Nigel continued speaking.

“This may be rude, but... this kingdom was weakened by to the demon invasion. It'll be difficult for this kingdom to regain its stability.”

“I won't deny that, but...”

“I do not believe the demons will give up with just this. I'm sure that a second and third wave will come. Surely, Your Majesty is also aware of this? Once the kingdom is attacked again, will you be able to stand up against them?”

“Don't be stupid. I don't need your concern. My kingdom will surely be alright...”

“...If that is indeed so, how do you explain the current situation?”

“...Guh.”

The king's face twisted. He couldn't answer.

“This proposal shouldn't be disadvantageous for your kingdom, either. It's but an offer to help alleviate the turmoil until the kingdom stabilizes once again. Your Majesty, please accept my offer.”

Nigel bowed once again.

There was nothing odd about Nigel's request. At first glance, it sounded sensible, and it was also for the good of the kingdom.

Still, the king couldn't easily accept it.

That was only natural.

The king probably thought Lynchgiham was trying to seize control of Veirclaim.

That, too, was only natural.

In fact, there were many cases in which a kingdom was seized through such a method.

However, for Nigel to offer such was also correct.

Bargaining at the last minute.

Receiving an immediate answer might not be possible.

“F, father...”

While a tense silence flowed...

There was one person who raised his hand and spoke to the king.

“...What’s wrong, Claude?”

It was Claude.

Frightened, his voice was wavering.

“I think you should accept the offer.”

“What?”

“I, I mean...! There’s no doubt that our kingdom has been ravaged because of the demons, and it’s also true that they’ve helped us...”

I didn’t expect Claude to say any of that.

If he were the Claude I knew, he’d have straight up rejected it.

Although Claude was the first prince of that kingdom, the king said nothing.

After all, Claude was rebelling...

...I recalled how he begged me to cure Leticia.

Could it be, the demon invasion changed him?

However, Claude’s plea—

“—What are you saying! It’s still too early for you to get involved in politics! Don’t say anything unnecessary and stay quiet!”

—was easily rejected.

“H, hyii!”

For a moment, Claude looked both angered and terrified by the king.

However, he glanced at me, then Nigel, and said without relenting.

“But, Father, you should be aware of this already... At the current rate, our kingdom will be doomed. Surely, even now, the demons are looking for an opportunity to strike. We have no way to repel them. Why don’t we just listen to these people?”

“Claude, do you realize what you’re saying?! What do you know!?”

Oh no.

A parent-child quarrel had begun.

Apparently, Claude was on our side. He seemed to be having a hard time persuading the king.

It felt like the king would win that argument.

“...What do we do, now?”

“I don’t expect them to conclude this any time soon.”

Looking at Claude and the king who were arguing with each other, Nigel and I whispered to each other.

For the time being, was it safe to say that the answer would arrive tomorrow?

I didn’t want to waste too much time, but it couldn’t be helped if that happened.

“Hey.”

However, at that time.

Douglas, who had his arms folded and was keeping his mouth closed, stepped forward.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

In a flash, Douglas had rushed towards the king, grabbed him by the collar, and said.

“Do you think you have any choice in this? I could destroy this kingdom right away.”

# Chapter 100

## Please Apologize

Douglas pressured the king.

“I, I...”

Such a voice leaked out from the king. However, instead of letting him go, Douglas pressed him even harder.

“Bastard—!”

“Your Majesty, I’ll help you soon!”

Watching the situation, the knights whom were waiting nearby unsheathed their weapons.

They immediately tried to run up to the king...

... *giro*.

Douglas turned his keen eyes turned towards the knights.

“U, uuuh...”

As if petrified, the knights couldn’t move from where they stood.

“Douglas, please stop with your rude treatment.”

As our surroundings began making a fuss, I rebuked Douglas.

“Am I being rude? This guy is being unclear. I just want to hear his answer.”

“Still. We didn’t come to this kingdom to wage war. We came to convince them of our goal.”

“...You’re really naïve.”

Douglas reluctantly released the king.

The king coughed violently. Seeing that, the once petrified knights rushed towards the king. They looked worried.

The knights turned their eyes to Douglas, blaming him. However, Douglas had an unperturbed expression.

“You truly don’t have a sense of crisis, do you? Do you know what kind of predicament your kingdom is in, right now?”

You couldn’t even do anything to prevent the first wave, much else the second or the third. Don’t forget that, please.”

Douglas turned around, and called the king out.

The fact that Douglas was a dragon was unknown to everyone else.

Regardless, they most likely felt the weight of his words.

Actually, no one in that place could argue against Douglas’ words.

“I, I understand! I’d like to work with the ministers on the details, but in general, I agree in accepting your offer!”

Did Douglas’ action succeed?

The king said while holding his breath.

“Wise judgment. Thank you.”

Nigel smiled.

*Eh, it’s already been concluded?*

By the way, when Douglas rushed towards the king, Nigel made no particular attempt to stop him.

Did he deliberately do that to facilitate the discussion?

Nigel was quite the tactician.

“Gahaha! You have the capacity to think, after all!”

Douglas laughed with satisfaction.

...Could it be, Douglas was also acting to pressure the king?

If so, Douglas had grown, too...

“If you were to do anything strange, I was ready to destroy the kingdom as it is! Well, too bad, I didn’t get to vent out my frustration!”

...I took my words back.

As if someone like Douglas could do something as meticulous as that!

It seemed that he was simply annoyed with the king's attitude.

What Douglas said caused everyone to pale.

"Of course, let's discuss the details from now on. But, before that... there's still something that needs to be done urgently."

Nigel continued without wavering.

"The second wave may soon attack this kingdom. In that case, even if we were to combine our strength, I don't think we can defeat them."

"I, I see, how unnerving, but, you're probably right. But, will they really come? Is there something really of worth in this kingdom?"

"Yes, actually..."

Nigel told the king about the sealed Demon King.

Then.

"What the hell!? Is that true!?"

Everyone was surprised.

Apparently, it seemed that the king didn't know about the war of ancient times.

"Yes, doesn't that basically explain everything? Why that cruel archdemon let you go, why they didn't immediately kill you... about why they are so obsessed with this kingdom?"

"I, I believe you. I have to do something immediately..."

"That's right. But, it's probably not a good idea to fight the demons head-on. So..."

Nigel turned towards me.

It was finally my turn.

I stepped forward and greeted the king.

"Your Majesty, it is I, Eliane. It's been a long time."

“...”

My light bow resulted in the king showing a bitter expression.

I didn't care much about his attitude and proceeded with my suggestion.

“I shall place a barrier around this kingdom starting now. That way, the demons won't be able to attack.”

“What? You'll really do that?”

The king was amazed.

“Yes.”

“Back when you were still in this kingdom, I doubted your barrier... but, could it be, it's the real thing?”

“...”

*Haa...*

I wanted to sigh.

How stupid was that person?

He probably didn't believe in my power.

Honestly, when I heard what he said, I ended up wanting to go home. But there was no way I could do that, so I put up with it.

I had matured.

“Yes, but it'll be a temporary one. The barrier will cover this kingdom for about two weeks at most.”

Basically, a timed barrier.

Once that barrier was set, setting up another wouldn't be easy for me.

I'd require time to recover my magic. In the meantime, it was almost certain that the demons would attack again.

Actually, if I were to move the barrier enveloping Lynchgiham to Verclain, the barrier would be semi-permanent.

However, Lynchgiham would be in danger. I couldn't allow that



happen.

As expected, time was needed to conclude that matter. Being hasty wasn't a good idea.

"If you can do that, then you definitely must do so. But, once the barrier disappears, what then?"

"In the meantime, let's consider how we shall deal with the demons."

In other words, my barrier was for buying us some time.

It wasn't meant to serve as a solution.

If we couldn't find a way to repel the demons during those two weeks, the kingdom—and also the world—would end.

The demons must be stopped at all costs.

"Okay, I'll accept your offer. Let's start right away."

*Good.*

We had received permission from the king. Was it an exaggeration to say that the discussion was proceeding relatively smoothly?

I was satisfied with that. Nigel, on the other hand...

"...Your Majesty, don't you think you've forgotten something?"

He said severely.

"Did I...?"

"Yes. I've been made aware of what you've done to Eliane, the saint of this kingdom. Don't you think she deserves an apology and a thank you for everything?"

"..."

Nigel's words made the king tense up for a moment.

"Nigel, it's alright..."

"Eliane might say that, but I'm not convinced. Even if you were to treat her differently from now on, at the very least, you have to apology for what you've done to her."

Nigel swiftly interrupted me.

Would the king, who was more prideful than Claude, bow to me?

Would the discussion stay as smooth as before?

However, as if my anxiety had been a lie...

“...I’m sorry.”

The king stood up and bowed deeply on spot.

“For many years... thank you for what you have done for our kingdom. I don’t think you will forgive me, but please, for the sake of this kingdom, I want you to help me.”

The people around me were surprised by the scene.

Obviously.

For their king to bow his head to a young woman...

“...Your Majesty, that’s enough.”

After hearing what I said, the king slowly raised his face.

“But, from just hearing your words, I can’t be too sure, yet. I’ll be watching your actions from now on.”

“Of course.”

The king replied with a quivering voice.

I had been bullied by him.

I’d be forgiven for saying at least that much, right?

Nigel smiled in approval.

# Chapter 101

## The Plan of the Demons

The place was darker than midnight.

There was neither a ceiling nor a door while a round table floated in the air.

Inherently, it was a dimension where one's sense of balance was jeopardized.

In that a place, four demons surrounded the table.

"Baldur was killed."

The demon with the most magical power opened the discussion.

"It can't be helped."

"He was too hasty."

"He should've exercised more caution."

The remaining three agreed with his words.

However,

"Sure, he was too hasty. He wasn't ready to resurrect the Demon King. Regardless, there was no doubt that the kingdom was in crisis, giving an opportunity. Have you noticed anything else?"

The other three couldn't argue against the terrifying demon.

Baldur despised them for being 'meek'.

Said meekness was the result of the demons doing their best to ensure success.

However, there was no denying that a certain pessimistic feeling had permeated the demons.

Baldur chalked it up as cowardice.

The remaining demons were slightly aware of that. As such, they

didn't try to stop Baldur.

"In the end, Baldur was killed."

A demon opened his mouth.

"I heard that his army was also annihilated. Had we agreed with Baldur, and cooperated with him, we'd surely have been destroyed. Still, why does Chancellor Pewiz say that Baldur's actions weren't wrong?"

"That wasn't what I was saying. What I meant to say is we don't know when such an opportunity will return."

The demon called Chancellor Pewiz continued to speak.

"Compared to the original saint, the saints of these days have grown weaker. The original saint could envelop the entire world within a barrier while the present one can only shield a single kingdom. Not to mention, she is too naïve. We can take advantage of that."

"What is Chancellor Pewiz thinking? I hate it when you are indirect..."

The demons were frustrated.

"Certainly, that was a bit confusing. Still, I'm certain he means an opportunity to invade the royal capital and revive the Demon King has arisen."

Chancellor Pewiz raised his hand and declared loudly.

"Although the saint of the present era is weak, a timed barrier has been set around the royal capital. If we delay, that saint might get even stronger. Putting this off would be foolish."

"I agree with that plan. I'm tired of cooping up in such a cramped place. I want to go wild."

Chancellor Pewiz smiled with satisfaction at what those words.

"In two weeks, once the barrier has disappeared, we will all launch an attack. Are there any objections?"

Chancellor Pewiz asked.

None of the demons objected.

Everyone had the same mindset as Baldur.

For a noble race like the demons to cower in fear was unacceptable.

“But, Chancellor Pewiz, wouldn’t launching a full on attack right after the barrier disappears be a bit reckless? The saint and the others would see it coming.”

“Of course. About that, I have a plan. Even if they do their best to prepare, humans who couldn’t stand against Baldur have no hope. Either way, the Demon King will be resurrected. It’s a checkmate.”

“In other words... we must prioritize the resurrection of the Demon King and ignore the humans?”

“Indeed.”

Chancellor Pewiz nodded.

“Victory is guaranteed, however, I’m worried about something...”

“What is it?”

“No, I’m just overthinking. It’s too farfetched. Even if it happens, it should be impossible for this generation’s saint to draw out its full power...”

“...?”

—in two weeks, a war was ready to begin.

# Chapter 102

## Unlike the Normal Prince

Ever since then...

...I had successfully set up a barrier for Verclain.

Finally, I was able to take a breather. Intending to look around the castle, I was exploring.

“The castle has not changed much.”

Well, that was only natural.

Only half a year had passed ever since my banishment.

But... I felt like more time had passed.

Recently, it had been enjoying myself. However, I still remembered how angry I was upon being exiled.

Even just walking around reminded me of the past.

The memories I had of that place were not very pleasant, yet I felt nostalgic. It was complicated...

“Eliane...”

I was called to from behind.

I stopped and looked back at the voice.

“My, if it is not Your Highness Claude. What are you doing in a place like this?”

I spoke in a deliberate manner.

Claude approached me with a slow pace.

“I, I have not properly spoken with you, yet...”

“Properly?”

“Indeed, for Leticia... and also for creating a barrier for this kingdom.

I am indebted to you.”

... *Eh?*

I was about to make a strange sound. However, I managed to stop myself.

“I am sorry for doubting your power as the saint. What I did was wrong.”

“Is something wrong with you? Normally, you would not say anything like this...”

“...I’ve changed.”

*Why is he blushing?*

Crossing his arms, Claude averted his gaze from me.

Because of that, I inadvertently spouted a childish reply.

“Let me tell you the truth... I did not return back for the sake of this kingdom. However, if this kingdom were to be usurped by demons, the world would be endangered. That is why, it could not be helped. So, do not get me wrong.”

“Of course.”

Actually, that wasn’t the only reason. Still, I didn’t want Claude to misunderstand, so I deliberately said that.

“Anyway, Claude, about earlier... why did you argue with His Majesty? Usually, you would not do such a thing.”

“...”

Towards my question, Claude was at loss for words.

Then, he tried to muster an answer.

“...I feel like I can’t stay like this forever. I can’t even protect Leticia, much less my own kingdom. After Eliane’s banishment, I realized how powerless I am.”

“... *Hee.*”

I was impressed.

I was surprised Claude was be able to have such a revelation.

He continued while scratching his cheek.

“The prince of Lynchgiham is very competent. Even though we’re of the same age, he’s a good representative of his kingdom...”

“Do you mean Nigel?”

“Yes. It’s no wonder that His Majesty the King of Lyncnhgiham entrusted him with his soldiers. I think it’s amazing.”

“Fufufu, yes, Nigel is indeed famous.”

“I was impressed because I was made aware of our difference in capability.”

Claude said with a little dissatisfaction.

“But, one day, as a prince, I’ll catch up to him. No matter how long it takes.”

“It won’t be easy. Nigel is much better than you realize!”

Claude agreed with me.

Even if the praise came from Claude’s mouth, it was still for Nigel. As such, I was happy.

— *I’m truly engaged with such a person, right!?*

...I considered also blurting out that news to him, but I decided against it.

There was no need to tell him.

“Is that all you want to say to me?”

“No, there’s something more...”

Claude’s expression turned even more serious.

“Eliane, is it true that the Demon King was sealed in this kingdom? I mean, that’s just absurd...”

“It is true. Otherwise, the demons targeting this kingdom would not make sense, right?”



“That’s true. What are we going to do, now? Isn’t the barrier a timed one? Once the barrier fades, the demons will attack again. During these two weeks, we have to come up with something...”

“Everything will be fine. I did not return to this kingdom without help. There are ways to prevent the resurrection of the Demon King.”

“Huh?”

Claude tilted his head.

However, the chance for it to work was slim. Even if it was brought here, its success could not be claimed as absolute.

Regardless, as of the time, we had no choice.

“For that, I require your help, too, Claude. To prevent the resurrection of the Demon King...”

# Chapter 103

## Unity

“I think we need the power of the original saint.”

“You mean, the one who sealed the Demon King?”

Claude asked.

The king had been made aware of the existence of the original saint.

“Indeed.”

“I didn’t know such a person existed... she sounds incredible...”

“The same goes for me. Much less for you who said that she should simply remain buried with the previous generation.”

“...! Stop mentioning that! It’s... I truly regret those words... Now, I no longer doubt your power.”

I giggled when I saw Claude’s awkwardly expression of discomfort.

Had he been able to make me laugh like that from the start, I wouldn’t have been divorced or banished.

But thanks to that, I was able to meet Nigel. I regretted nothing.

“I believe the original saint had great power. If I could acquire even the slightest bit of her power... Surely, we would be able to defeat the demons.”

“Then, how will we do that? We don’t even know if she truly existed. How are we to even look for her power?”

I nodded.

The original saint sealed the Demon King within that kingdom.

There was a barrier in that kingdom...

Then, the most appropriate assumption to believe was that a clue regarding the original saint resided within the kingdom.

However...

“...Will we succeed? Do you have any other methods?”

“In any case, this is our only option as of the present.”

“I see... but what if you fail to find it?”

“Hmm... at that time, I will have to remove the barrier enveloping Lynchgiham and re-establish the barrier on Verclain.”

If the Demon King were to be resurrected, Lynchgiham would also be in peril.

As such, it was inevitable.

But, once the demons took notice of Lynchgiham, a case similar with Baldur's could happen again.

I shouldn't be as naïve as to think that such an opportunity would come again.

In the worst case, Lynchgiham might end up being taken hostage and held for ransom by the demons.

“With my current power, I can't create two everlasting barriers. I need to reach the level of the original saint... that is the best solution I can come up with.”

“Well, that's true. But, Eliane, you have the hardest role, here. Are you alright? Ever since we entered this kingdom, you have weakened.”

“Ara, are you worried?”

I glanced at Claude.

“D, don't get me wrong! If you fail, this kingdom will end! That'd be disadvantageous for me!”

Claude, whose face was red, panicked.

Due to his childish gesture, a giggle spilled from my mouth again.

“Do not worry. Also, I want to ask for your help.”

“My help?”

Claude pointed to himself.

“First, please support Nigel. He alone will not be enough to persuade the king.”

“I, I understand. I will try to persuade my father. I won’t cause any trouble for you. I don’t know if I can do it, but I will do my best.”

“I am looking forward to it. Also, one more thing... Is there anyone knowledgeable about the original saint? Someone who familiar with native folklore...”

“If I wasn’t mistaken...”

Claude put his hand under his chin and thought hard.

“There’s a famous historian in the royal capital. That person might know something.”

“Is there such a person? Can you tell me the location?”

“The location is slightly confusing, so I’ll give you a map later. I’ll also prepare a letter of introduction... that will help you, right?”

“Yes, it will help a lot.”

Honestly, ever since I became the saint of the kingdom, I hadn’t been allowed to leave the castle. As such, I wasn’t too familiar with the geography of the royal capital.

I truly appreciated his help.

*Now, that’s a start...*

As I thought about that.

“What’s wrong, Claude? You look a little concerned...”

Claude looked at loss, therefore, I asked him such.

“No, I’m not concerned. Just, that guy is a little eccentric... I wonder if the discussion will go smoothly...”

“Eccentric, well, that is alright. I am familiar with dealing such people.”

“Should I be retorting?”

“Who knows?”

Claude turned to stare at me.

He seemed to be aware that I was referring to him. Should I be scared?

Could it be, the reason he realized that was also part of his growth?

“Well, Eliane should be fine. I shall prepare the map and letter of introduction right away.”

“By the way, what is that person’s name?”

To my question, Claude replied.

“It’s Sieghard.”

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Before going to visit Sieghard, I discussed the future with Nigel.

“Eliane, I heard before you came here. Will it really work?”

He seemed to be worried.

“Yes, I will do something about it within two weeks.”

“Yes, but Eliane doesn’t have to shoulder everything alone. If you have any problems...”

“Of course, I will not act alone again. I will not end up like Baldur.”

I smiled bitterly.

“More importantly, Nigel, are you alright? You are dealing with the king. You have to exercise caution.”

“I’m the Prince of Lynchgiham. Of course, I will do my best.”

Nigel hit his chest.

The time limit was two weeks.

I couldn’t be lackluster about it.

Therefore, we decided to divide the roles, and moved to prevent the

resurrection of the Demon King.

First of all, Adolf, the leader of the knights.

He seemed hard at work collaborating with the knights of Verclaim.

No matter how much pride he has a knight of Lynchgiham, fighting the demons alone would be difficult for him.

Klaus was also in charge of the knights. As such, I needn't worry too much.

Next, was Douglas.

He was overseeing security within of the royal capital in places the turmoil hadn't yet subsided. He even kept an eye on the city's outskirts.

We wanted to prevent anything unexpected before the demons came.

He was also instructed to immediately report if anything happened within the royal capital.

Lastly... Nigel.

Nigel was having discussions with the king and his ministers.

Although his explanation was well-received, distrust still remained.

Verclaim was still afraid of being blindsided.

For the time being, there was Claude who had become our ally, but... he was inexperienced. I didn't expect much of him.

However, he was still the first prince.

The king might be different, but the ministers couldn't ignore Claude's opinion.

"Then, let's pray for each other's luck."

"Yes, I'll acquire a clue about the original saint."

Nigel and I exchanged such words and split up at once.

Alright.

I'll be busy from now on!

# Chapter 104

## Meeting Mr. Sieghard

After parting with Nigel, I went to Sieghard's place with the map I received from Claude.

"What kind of person is he, I wonder...?"

...He was said to be an eccentric, but...

I heard that many scholars were like that. Therefore, I wondered if Sieghard also fell under that a category.

With Claude's letter of introduction, everything should be fine.

But what if he were to ask to be paid in advance?

"Hmm... I just can't help but worry. After all, I've never met him before. Well, now isn't the time to be shy."

I braced myself and hurried to Sieghard's place.

I walked by relying on the map, however, the road only grew more complicated.

The moment I left the main street and entered a back alley was when anxiety set in.

"Is this really the place?"

As I said to Claude, I wasn't familiar with the royal capital because I was rarely allowed to go out back then.

Even though it was midday, it was dark due to the path going between the buildings.

I proceeded to walk down the dim, damp, road.

"Ah... could it be, here...?"

Eventually, I found a small rusty door on a wall at the end.

"Well, the map pointed here..."

I didn't want to be rude, but... the building was so dirty. I didn't think that place was fit to be called a home.

If someone were to tell me a monster lived there, I'd believe them.

Was Claude lying?

Such a thought occurred. However, I immediately shook my head and denied it.

"He'd gain nothing by lying... Well, there's only one way for me to affirm the truth."

*...Do I have no choice but to enter?*

I made up my mind and knocked on the door twice.

I waited for a while, but I didn't get a reply.

"How strange... is no one home?"

...I had wasted my time, then.

However, I couldn't just turn back.

That was the only place I'd be able to find any clues.

I couldn't hesitate.

Once the barrier dissipated, our time would be up.

"T, this is rude of me, but, excuse me...!"

Without waiting for a reply, I took the plunge and pulled the door.

*Gyiii...*

I heard an unpleasant sound.

"Uwah!"

I saw the room, and gasped out in surprise.

"There's a lot of them...!"

That was right.

The room was full of books.



At the same time, it was also very cluttered. Finding a foothold was difficult.

“But... the electricity is on. There are also signs of life. I’m certain that someone lives here...”

*Unbelievable!*

Honestly, I was terrified by the room.

I wanted to turn around and return to the royal castle immediately.

But... even though it was messy, it didn’t smell unpleasant.

On the contrary, there was a sweet perfume like scent in the room.

That was probably the reason why I could handle it. But... the level of the mess... it was beyond words.

“...Hm~? Is there a visitor?”

I was stunned.

The pile of books steadily moved. Then, a right hand shot out from inside.

*Buried alive!?*

However, the owner of the voice calmly popped his face out of the mountain of books.

“O, fair maiden, what business do you have with me?”

He beckoned to me.

“I, I came here to meet with the historian, Mr. Sieghard...”

“That’s none other than me. What happened? One sec—it’s uncouth to talk to a beautiful lady like you as I am.”

The man—Sieghard—emerged from the pile of books and tidied his attire.

Tousled hair. Because of that, his eyes were hidden by his bangs. I also couldn’t see his face.

...But he seemed to be a youth?

His appearance was different from what I imagined.

“...Why is the room so messy?”

“Is it? What are you talking about? If it’s this level, it’s still considered tidy. Although it seems to be cluttered, they’re actually perfectly arranged. I can find any book I want to read right away. It’s convenient like this.”

Sieghard proudly extended his arms.

*I, I beg to differ...*

“...Are there any history books here?”

“Indeed. Most history books from all over the world are here. I had a hard time procuring them.”

“Then, may I ask for a book regarding the traditions of this kingdom from 300 years ago?”

I specified the book to Sieghard.

He contemplated. “Let’s see... Surely, it’s around here—no, was it here? Nope. Then, over here...”

He immediately filtered through his books.

Because of the forceful way he did it, an avalanche of books occurred. The room grew even more miserable.

After wrestling with books for about five minutes...

...Eventually, Sieghard uttered. “It’s not here.”

“...By that, do you mean that you don’t have the book?”

“No, I think it’s around here somewhere. I’d like you to give me a little more time... about half a day.”

“... *Why is this room so messy?*”

“I’m so sorry. It actually isn’t perfectly arranged. It’s a mess. I just didn’t have time to clean it up, and before I realized it, the room was already like this.”

Sieghard finally confessed.

When I heard that, I sighed inwardly.

“It can’t be helped. I will help you clean up this room! Otherwise, we won’t be able to discuss anything properly.”

“Is that alright with you?”

“Of course. After all, we need space to sit...”

...To be honest, I was sick of seeing that room.

“Give me a moment. First, let’s put the books on the bookshelf...”

I immediately started cleaning the room.

# Chapter 105

## Clues

“I’m grateful for your help. Thank you very much.”

Sieghard thanked me.

As usual, his eyes were hidden beneath his bangs, so his expression was hard to see.

He seemed to have a good-looking face, though. I thought it’d be great if he got a haircut, but that would have been overstepping my bounds. As such, I decided to say nothing.

“...Please clean up regularly from now on.”

“I can’t argue back. Even so, I’m truly sorry to have had a maiden like you to clean up. Is it perhaps one of your hobbies?”

“...? That isn’t the case...”

Back when I was still the saint, I was also made to do chores.

Nowadays, I just cleaned up without giving it much thought.

“I see... indeed, you’re an admirable woman. Would you like to marry me?”

“I refuse, I’m already spoken-for. Also, even as a joke, that’s in bad taste. Especially considering that this is our first meeting.”

“I’m sorry. Your fiancé is a lucky man. I wish to salute him.”

What kind of expression would Sieghard make if he were to learn that my fiancé was none other than a prince?

But, considering his personality, he might just find it intriguing.

“...Let’s get to the main subject. What business do you have with me?”

“Well, about that...”

I showed Sieghard the letter of introduction written by Claude.

Sieghard was surprised.

“No way, that Prince Claude wrote something like this...???”

“What do you mean?”

“His Majesty the King despises me. Hence, I came to pursue my research in this remote place.”

...He was hated by the king?

I didn't know the circumstances, but that explained why he lived there.

It didn't excuse the fact that his room was messy, though!

“Why would the king...?”

“You heard from His Highness that I'm a historian, correct?”

“Indeed.”

“Of my research, I opted to investigate the history of the saint—a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation in this kingdom. His Majesty the King didn't appreciate that, though.”

*The saint!*

When I heard that word, my eyes beamed.

Did Sieghard notice?

“From the letter of introduction, it seems that you were the saint of this kingdom. It also seems that without my knowing, you've been exiled.”

“Is that so?”

“Because I live in a place like this, I don't get much information.”

Sieghard shrugged.

“This kingdom does stupid things. The power of the saint is real. The demon invasion wasn't surprising to me.”

“Let's talk about that another day. We don't have much time right now...”

“What do you mean?”

Sieghard widened his eyes.

“Actually...”

I explained the situation of the kingdom to Sieghard.

“So that’s what happened...”

He leaned down and put his hand on his chin, pondering seriously.

I saw a glimpse of his right eye—

— *beautiful...*

He had a keen eye, like a seeker peering into the abyss.

“Limited-time barrier... once that barrier disappears, the demons will surely attack this kingdom again. The reason is because the ancient Demon King is sealed in this kingdom.”

“So, you’re aware of that, too?”

“Of course—well, no matter how much I advised His Majesty, it was to no avail, though.”

Sieghard laughed drily.

“Therefore, you desire the power of the original saint.”

“Yes, that is the only way right now. Or, do you have some other suggestions?”

“No, it’s not like that. I think that’s a wise decision. The original saint was very powerful.”

Sieghard’s words depressed me.

*As a saint, isn’t this a big deal...?*

Although Philip, the Spirit King, praised me, there were too many things I couldn’t do compared to the original saint.

Did Sieghard perhaps pick up on my thoughts?

“Don’t worry about it. The original saint was just on a whole different level. Also, even if you could set barrier around the entire world, it

would disappear once you die. Once that happens, history will only repeat itself. There's also the case that the following saints will not receive the same level of power. None of that is your fault."

Sieghard spoke in a comforting tone.

Sieghard sure was very kind.

Listening to his voice calmed me—was it because he understood me?

"So... Sieghard, is there a way for me to acquire the same power as the original saint?"

I asked Sieghard again.

Then, he replied in a more serious tone.

"...I don't know. The original saint was a special case. This will be rude of me, but every saint after her has been declining in power. I think it'll be difficult for you to get on her level."

When I heard that, I felt like I had dropped to the bottom of a cliff.

I, I never expected it to be easy, but... I believed there might be some sort of clue...

...It seemed that I had returned to zero.

However.

"...I have an idea—the Goddess."

"The Goddess...? The saint is certainly called the Agent of the 'Goddess'."

"That is correct. The saint can exert her power due to the blessing of the Goddess. In other words, she—the original saint—had that much strength due to the blessing of the Goddess."

"So, I should try to find the Goddess instead?"

Sieghard nodded at my question.

*I see.*

I was so fixated on the original saint, I hadn't considered that.

“But... will that not be difficult? Just like with the original saint, I have no leads on the Goddess either...”

“There’s no direct connection between you and the original saint. Given that, it seems more likely for you to find the Goddess who blessed upon you the power of the saint.”

What he said was sensible.

However, there was a crucial issue.

While I was blessed by the Goddess, I had never directly spoken to her.

The fact still remained though—the Goddess was more powerful than us saints.

To find the Goddess... I didn’t know where to even start.

I told Sieghard my concerns.

Then,

“...Indeed, the saint is just a substitute for the Goddess. The saint can’t be the goddess herself, but... the one who is a perfect match with the saint’s blessing is also said to be the closest to the Goddess.”

“Perfect... match...”

“Do you have an inkling? Of a person who is perfectly suitable for the Goddess’ protection? In a situation like now, when the world is in peril, you may be able to communicate with the Goddess through that person.”

I immediately knew what Sieghard was implying—

—a person who could perfectly adapt to the blessing of the Goddess.

—a person whom was precious to me.

“...Nigel.”

\*\*\*T/N: Basically, this chapter can be surmised into this:

> Sieghard: “Apparently, enveloping the entire world in a barrier isn’t the most effective solution, because the protection will cease once you



die, and the same tragedy will happen.”

> Eliane: “Understandable, so let’s do just that?”

> Sieghard: “Yea.”

> Eliane: “OK.”

# Chapter 106

## The Agent of the Goddess

After thanking Sieghard, I immediately returned to the royal castle.

“Nigel, could you give me a moment of your time?”

I beckoned to Nigel as he emerged from the conference room.

“Hmm... sure. The discussion has just finished. You seem to have found a clue regarding the original saint.”

Nigel looked a little tired.

Was he harshly told off by the king and the minister?

But he didn't seem depressed.

Their discussion looked to be going in a good direction.

“No, I could not attain any information regarding the original saint, but I have come up with another solution.”

“Another method?”

Nigel tilted his head.

“The Goddess, the saint is the agent of the Goddess. If I speak to her, I might be able to learn something.”

“I see... but will you be able to? Even if you are saint, you have never communicated with the Goddess before, right?”

“Certainly, but...”

I explained Sieghard's theory to Nigel.

Nigel seemed interested.

“I see, so you'll be able to communicate with the Goddess through me. That sounds like quite a nice idea.”

“Hence why, I need your help, Nigel.”

“Of course, what wouldn’t I do for Eliane?”

Nigel slapped his chest.

Such a reliable person.

“Previously, when I bestowed upon you the blessing of the Goddess, what was it like? There may be a hint hidden there.”

“I see... it’s hard to explain in words, but it felt like my strength was being drawn out.”

Nigel looked towards the ceiling and continued.

“That power was something I had never felt before... I felt like I wasn’t myself.”

“Not... yourself?”

“Yes. To put it simply, it was as if someone were manipulating me. However, I was still conscious.”

...As if someone were manipulating him.

Maybe the Goddess temporarily borrowed Nigel’s body? Yet when he was granted the Goddess’ blessing, he didn’t lose consciousness. In short... the consciousness of the Goddess and Nigel merged together?

If so, then communicating with the Goddess might not be so impossible, after all.

“Allow me grant you the blessing of the Goddess once more, Nigel. That way, we may be able to hear the voice of the Goddess.”

I didn’t know if it would work.

However, it seemed worth trying.

If the Goddess wished for the world’s peace, then now was the right time to ask her.

The Goddess seemed to have appeared during such a crisis long time—probably during the era of the original saint.

I might be able to hear the voice of the Goddess.

“Nigel.”

“Alright, let’s do it right away. Let’s find an empty place. Otherwise, you might not be able to concentrate, right?”

“Indeed.”

Nigel and I went to a secluded place.

\*\*\*

Eventually, we ended up in the royal palace courtyard.

“There are no signs of people here. The place looks just right.”

Nigel nodded at my words.

The area was completely dark.

The half-moon floating in the sky kindly watched over us.

“Then, I shall begin.”

“About time.”

I lightly put my hand on Nigel’s back.

Then, his body shone.

The brilliance spread and cut through the darkness of the night.

Up until that point, I had bestowed him the blessing of the Goddess to fight Alberto and Baldur.

That was only the beginning.

“Nigel, do you feel any different?”

“No, it’s the same as before... there’s an incredible power in my body  
—”

—When Nigel tried to continue speaking, he lost both his strength and consciousness.

“N, Nigel!?”

After supporting his body as it was toppling over, I gently laid him on the ground.

Nigel, with his eyes closed, appeared to be sleeping.

*What happened?!*

That had never happened before...

“Nigel, Nigel! Please wake up! Are you alright?!”

Impatient, I shook Nigel’s body.

Could it be, was he no longer able to withstand the blessing of the Goddess?

However, Nigel’s body was still emitting a divine light.

If he indeed couldn’t adapt to the blessing of the Goddess, then such a phenomenon wouldn’t be explainable.

“I, I should get help...!”

It was when I was about to leave—

“—There, is, no, need, to...”

I could hear a voice from Nigel.

“Nigel?”

“...Finally, I got through... I cannot, communicate... for long...”

An intermittent voice.

Nigel remained unconscious.

Although the voice came from him, it wasn’t his.

The gentle voice was that of a female.

...Could it be...

“...Are you the Goddess?”

“That is... correct.”

It was still hard to hear, but my guessed seemed to be correct.

I crouched down on the spot and asked the Goddess.

“Goddess! Please tell me! As you already know, the world is in peril! I do not have enough power!”

When I tried to continue, the voice interjected.

“I understand... the Demon King... the crisis of resurrection, hence why, through this person, I...”

I never anticipated this sort of development.

I concentrated on the Goddess’ every word.

“...The power, given to you, is incomplete.”

“Incomplete?”

“Yes... the ‘path’ that connects me to this world, is gone, that is why. If you are able, to restore that, then I can help you...”

Does that mean if the power granted to me by the Goddess were whole, I could be like the original saint?

“What should I do?”

“The remnant, of the original saint...”

The voice of the Goddess was getting smaller. It grew faint, to a point I had difficulty making out her words.

Few people seemed to be able to communicate with the Goddess.

What was the ‘path’ mentioned by the Goddess?

“Except, the original saint is my ancestor. Surely, there is nothing left of her...”

“There, is...”

“Huh?”

When I listened, the Goddess continued.

“The original saint, at the expense of herself, sealed the Demon King... she is still slumbering with the Demon King here...”

# Chapter 107

## The Location of the Original Saint

The original saint was still slumbering in my world...

The moment I heard that, I leaned forward and questions started to flow from my mouth.

“Where is she?! Where are the demon king and the original saint slumbering!? Does that mean if I can find her, I can also gain the same power as her!?”

“...That...”

The Goddess’ voice was almost inaudible.

However, I was able to obtain a crucial piece of information.

“I do not know, I hope... you are able... to find the ‘path’...”

In the end, the divine light enveloping Nigel disappeared. At the same time, I could no longer hear the voice of the Goddess.

Silence descended once again.

...My mind was blank.

“O, oof...”

“Nigel, are you alright?”

Nigel opened his eyes.

While holding his head, he sat up.

“Why am I...?”

“The truth is...”

I told Nigel everything.

“I see... with just a remnant of the original saint, you will be able to attain the full power.”

“Indeed. Therefore, we should focus on discovering where the demon king is sealed.”

“Did the Goddess tell you the location?”

I shook my head.

“So, it was indeed the truth. The demon king is sealed in this kingdom. That explains why Baldur decided to invade the royal capital.”

“Tis a shame that Baldur is gone. At the very least, we could have asked about the place...”

“That has passed. We can only focus on the present.”

“That is right.”

Nigel agreed.

Recently, a lot had happened. My mind was getting dizzy.

However, I couldn't afford to be lackluster.

Afterwards, Nigel and I made plans for the future.

\*\*\*

To uncover where the demon king was sealed.

Talk was easy. Finding the exact place was extremely difficult.

“It looks like no one knows...”

“That's right.”

Nigel said with a troubled face.

The day after I communicated with the Goddess.

We immediately started gathering information from those who might know where the demon king was sealed.

However, no one had a clue.

That might have been unavoidable.



In the first place, the war happened during ancient times. No one knew the demon king had been sealed there.

I didn't think it'd be easy, but our time was limited. I couldn't help but be impatient.

A few days had passed since then, but I couldn't uncover a single clue. I passed those days in agony.

"Not even Sieghard has a clue... what do I do?"

"Sieghard... the historian you were talking about? Right now, he seems to be the most knowledgeable."

"Right..."

"...That reminds me, Philip might know something."

Nigel clapped his hands together as he made the suggestion.

Philip, the spirit king, knew of the wars from ancient times and the demon king.

Therefore, he might know something.

However...

"...No good. I asked Douglas to go to the spirit village to ask, but he also did not know anything."

"Is that so? Well, otherwise, it'd be too easy, I suppose."

Nigel expression flashed disappointment.

The demons must have been steadily preparing to invade again.

As long as the barrier continued to stand, there was nothing to worried about, but...

...I couldn't let my guard down. There was no telling what the enemy was capable of.

"I cannot even talk to the Goddess..."

Using the same method as last time, I tried to communicate with the Goddess once again—to no avail.

“...I will talk to Douglas again. I will ask him to guard the royal capital. In the meantime, I might be able to figure something out.”

“Yes, I understand. I want to come with you, but I have a meeting with the ministers... forgive me.”

“You do not have to apologize. Let us do our best.”

“Alright.”

We had decided what to do next—therefore, it was time to act.

I turned on my heels and set off to meet with Douglas.

However,

“Eliane.”

“Huh?”

Nigel called out to me, and I turned around.

He suddenly hugged me, and gently pressed his lips against mine.

*H, hyaa...!*

“I’m sorry for being sudden... but I want you to cheer up. I want to spend more time with you, but the circumstances won’t allow it. Therefore, at the very least...”

“I, it’s no problem, but it will be awkward if someone were to see us, so...”

My face must have been bright red.

Nigel probably had confirmed that no one was around.

...But, apart from that, it was too sudden, I almost had a heart attack.

Even though Nigel had released me, my heart was thumping rapidly.

“Then, I shall excuse myself. Good luck, Eliane.”

“Y, yes...”

Nigel waved his hand to me.

...Huh.

Nigel sometimes showed a teasing, childish, side to me.

I thought that side of him was adorable.

I clenched my fist, and tried to walk again.

...Hmm?

“Is anyone there?”

At the corner of the passage.

Because I felt that something was off, I decided to call out. However, there was no reply.

The sign of the presence disappeared entirely—was it because I noticed?

If someone truly was lurking there, I wanted some kind of explanation. But I could simply be jumping at shadows...

“...Well, that is not important right now. I have to go to Douglas right away.”

I decided to forget about it, and kept walking.

The strange presence I had felt soon disappeared from my mind.

# Chapter 108

## The Friendship Between Men

“Doulgas, are you there?”

The city clock tower. It was the second tallest building after the royal castle. From there, the entire royal capital could be seen.

Douglas was on the top floor.

I spoke to Douglas while sat on the edge and gazed at the sky.

“What happened? Have you uncovered the location of the demon king, yet?”

Douglas looked back at me and asked.

“No, I do not have a single clue towards that matter. Hence, I want to speak to you.”

I sat next to Douglas.

“Is that so? Well, unfortunately, I don’t know anything. The wars of the ancient times happened before I was born. I have no idea where the demon king is sealed.”

“Regardless... if we were to talk about it, it might jog your memories?”

“Gahaha, perhaps. But, if that’s indeed the case, I would’ve gone to you immediately. Is that the reason why you came all the way here?”

“Yes. My apologies for bothering you, Douglas. Not to mention, I am also in the mood to stare at the city.”

“Well, if you say so, it’s no problem.”

Douglas turned around once again.

“The wind feels nice.”

“That’s right, it’s getting colder. This has been my favorite spot ever since I found the royal capital.”

It was only natural for Douglas to say so.

How many years had it been since I had a panoramic view of the royal capital.

Ever since I became the saint, I had never seen it again.

The town still had claw marks which indicated that the demon invasion had indeed taken place. Everyone's anxiety still ran deep.

But... regardless, they were doing their best to recover.

It might be a good thing for humans to try to stand up as many times as they wanted even if they were about to be crushed.

When I saw that scenery, I somehow felt that way.

"Oh, there's a bird on your shoulder, Douglas."

When I turned, I saw a small bird perched on his shoulder.

Douglas brought his fingers close to the little bird's mouth.

"When I come here to rest, they often come. It tickles, I dislike it."

Although he said that, Douglas didn't seem uncomfortable.

On the contrary, there was a faint smile hanging on his mouth.

Perhaps feeling completely at ease, the little bird didn't even try to escape when Douglas tried to touch it.

"Fufu, it seems to trust you. I do not believe it will hurt you."

"Is that so? The bird just wanted to rest, and I happened to be here. It's convenient for him."

*Is Douglas shy?*

While scratching his cheek, Douglas replied with that.

I wasn't the small bird, so I couldn't know its perspective. However, if I were to consider its feelings, I felt that my guess wasn't too far off.

There was no way to confirm it, though. Birds didn't speak, after all.

...Hmm?

Wait...

“A bird’s perspective...?”

“What’s wrong, Eliane?”

Douglas looked at my face.

“...I may have been narrowminded until now. I never tried to look beyond myself.”

That may have been due to the time limit of two weeks.

However, by looking over the royal capital and considering the feelings of the bird, a different perspective came to me.

“...What if I were to think from the customs, perspective, and values of a demon?”

“What are you blabbering about?”

Douglas tilted his head, perhaps not understanding what I was getting at.

“I heard from Claude. The archdemon, Baldur, sat on the throne where His Majesty the King was originally sitting and refused to vacate it for long periods of time...”

...I heard that was his routine before attacking Philip and the others.

“What? That’s because the dude had a sovereignty complex...”

“Maybe that is correct. However, what if there were other reasons? Other reasons for him to refuse to leave that spot?”

I might had been grasping at straws.

Baldur was trying to conquer the world. It was because he aspired for a bigger world, something that was much more vast than the narrow Demon Realm.

Even so, was there a need for him to stay cooped up upon such a small throne?

“Could it be, that Baldur was afraid of something? That there was something there, something that he needed to protect...”

oh!”

“Did you notice it, too, Douglas?”

Douglas was also taken aback.

“There’s something in the throne room!”

“Yes, but we do not know for sure. However, this is something worth investigating.”

I slowly stood up.

“The investigation is also at a standstill. I shall inform Claude so that we may examine the throne.”

“Hmm, that might be a good idea. But, Eliane, shouldn’t I come with you? If there’s something there, it might be dangerous...”

“No, Douglas, please guard the royal capital. If anything happens, contact me using telepathy immediately. The barrier is still up, but the effect has been diminishing. There is no saying when the demons will attack.”

“Okay, good luck to you.”

With that said, Douglas held out his fist.

I didn’t comprehend it at first, but in the end, I decided to also hold out my fist to match him.

“Leave it to me. I shall also be depending on you, Douglas.”

“Sure.”

When I did so, I felt that our hearts were deeply connected...

...The friendship between men, was that how it felt?

After parting with Douglas, I returned to the royal castle once again.

# Chapter 109

## The Fake Saint Removes her Mask

I immediately asked Claude and the king for permission to investigate the throne.

“...As I thought, there is something cleverly hidden here. I feel a strange sense of incongruity.”

While touching the throne, I concluded so.

“Then, Eliane, does it have something to do with the demon king being sealed?”

“All I can see is a somewhat awkward throne...”

Nigel and Claude said so.

Currently—Nigel, Claude, and I were circling the throne. The king and some of the knights were also present.

They were staring at us.

“Yes, but it seems to be cleverly concealed. It was probably sealed with magic.”

“I see, so it’s incomprehensible even to Eliane.”

I nodded my head.

“The demons probably set this up. If other people were to poke their noses here, it would be a hindrance. Therefore, it is possible they conceal it using that method.”

I wouldn’t be able to comprehend without looking into it.

No wonder no one had noticed it until now.

“But, if it’s impossible even for Eliane, then no one else can.”

Claude dropped his shoulders.

“It is as His Highness Claude said—at present, there is no one in this kingdom who excels at magic more than Eliane—no, I don’t think



there's anyone else in the world."

"If I were to study it, I might figure something out. However, as we already know, we do not have much time. At the very least, we need to understand the true nature behind this incongruity. That way, we may discover something."

Everyone had a headache.

However, I had finally found a clue.

I didn't want to give up and go back to the drawing board.

"Except, we do not have time to worry. I shall look into it a bit more. As for His Highness Claude and His Majesty the King, please call a court wizard."

It was when I tried to continue my words.

"That's unnecessary."

A haughty female voice echoed in the throne room.

Everyone's attention gathered on her at once.

"Le, Leticia!"

Claude rushed and approached to the woman—Leticia.

"Leticia, are you alright? Your complexion seems to have improved a lot..."

"Eliane, let me do it."

Leticia ignored Claude's words and requested that of me.

When I nodded, Leticia approached the throne, and put her hand on it.

"...As I thought, it isn't magic, but a curse. It is one the blocks entry."

"Is the entrance blocked?"

"Yes, in my view, that curse is the key. If you can lift it, the path down should open."

Leticia spoke in a straightforward manner.

*I see... so it is a curse?*

I wasn't an expert on curses. By all means, my knowledge was inferior to a sorcerer's.

However, as we learned from Alberto's case, Leticia was a sorcerer. Not to mention, a fairly excellent one.

Hence why, it was possible for her to detect the curse set on the throne.

"Leticia... what's with your manner of speaking?"

Claude anxiously asked from behind.

Certainly... Leticia used to speak sweetly, to the point I might give me diabetes.

But... it seemed that she had dropped all that.

"It's impossible for me to break this curse."

Leticia ignored Claude's question and continued.

"At first, I thought the demons placed it after successfully invading this kingdom—but, such isn't the case. The likes of them can't cast a curse that will persist even if they die."

"That means...?"

"I'm sure it's from an even greater being. I think they set this up so humans wouldn't discover where the demon king was sealed..."

...An even greater being.

Someone whom was even greater than an archdemon—which meant, either the original saint, or the demon king?

Still, I didn't think the Original Saint can use curses. Therefore, the demon king was more likely.

My assumption started to transform into conviction.

"Anyway, the curse is pretty solid. I can't lift it, but if it's you, Eliane..."

"I understand."

Now that I knew it was a curse, everything was settled.

I closed my eyes and concentrated. In an instant, the curse was lifted.

“Okay, with this, the curse has been ended. Oh? The color of the floor has changed unnaturally... could it be...”

I tried placing my hand on the floor and sending magical power.

I couldn't believe what happened next.

The floor glowed, and when the light diminished, a staircase leading downward appeared.

“We seem to be on the right track.”

When I peered inside, all I saw was darkness. It was as if the stairs descended endlessly.

Furthermore, from inside, I could feel magical power and resentment that I had never felt before.

My legs froze.

...There was no doubt. Something was down there.

“Thank you, Leticia. If you had not told me, I would not have noticed the curse.”

“You're welcome.”

Leticia averted her gaze.

“What are you talking about...? Leticia, how could you have noticed something that not even Eliane could? Also, about the curse...”

“It's quite simple if you think about it—because I'm a sorcerer; one who can cast curses.”

Leticia simply blurted everything.

“...Huh?”

Claude had an odd expression.

It seemed that he still failed to understand anything.

“Fufufu, what's the matter? Are you mad that I hid such a fact from

you?”

“I don’t care anymore. Also... the answer to that is obvious.”

Even Leticia’s bearing had changed.

Previously, she acted childish... but, as of the present, she looked like a determined adult.

“I like the current you better. I wish you had told me the truth since the beginning.”

“Is that so? I wonder what’s going on in your mind. Well, whatever’s easier for me.”

Leticia said bitterly.

“Well, it seems like the two of you still have a lot to say to each other. However, now is not the time. Let us go descend down this immediately.”

“Eliane, I’ll go, too.”

I nodded when I saw Nigel take a step forward.

“...Honestly, I don’t know what’s going on, but it’s definitely important. If you like, maybe you should take some of the kingdoms proud knights?”

The king suggested that.

“No, it is fine. I am happy with your consideration, but there is no saying what will happen inside.”

I politely refused.

Although I said that, I thought that they’d just be a hindrance.

As it was, it’d be difficult for Nigel and I to protect everyone. The inside seemed to be narrow which restricted movement.

“Then, Nigel, let us go—”

“—wait.”

When I tried to descend, Leticia put her hand on her chest and said bluntly;

“I’m going with you. Don’t worry, I won’t hinder you.”

# Chapter 110

## The Fake Saint is About to Change

*Leticia, too?*

“Are you certain?”

When I asked, Leticia nodded with a serious expression.

To be honest, I still didn’t want to interact too much with Leticia.

I didn’t completely trust her yet. I didn’t want to end up stabbed in the back.

Back when I was still the kingdom’s saint, I was hindered quite a bit by her lying.

Hence why—

—I couldn’t just accept her easily.

But...

“What do you think, Nigel?”

“Hmm... that’s right. I’m certainly worried. But, at the same time, she’s a curse specialist. I don’t know what’s going on but have such a sorcerer around will be handy.”

“That is true...”

Apparently, Nigel shared my opinion.

Honestly, I was worried about Leticia.

However, the fact remained that she was a first-class sorcerer.

She was the one who detected the powerful curse behind the throne... that we’d encounter similar curses ahead seemed likely.

“...”

I looked straight into Leticia’s eyes. Leticia’s gaze didn’t waver.

...Beautiful, round, eyes.

She looked like a heroine from a romance novel.

When I was a saint, Leticia had more darkness in her eyes. I had wondered when she'd implode...

But now, Leticia didn't have the same shadow. It seemed that she truly wanted to be of help.

"I understand..."

I relaxed my shoulders and told Leticia.

"But, if you make any suspicious movements, I will not remain silent. Please follow our instructions, if you can accept that..."

"It seems that our holy woman here can talk sense!"

*Pachin*— Leticia clicked her fingers.

She looked like an innocent boy.

Just like Claude, was Leticia about to change?

...That was right.

"What about you, Claude?"

From a corner of my eyes, I beckoned to Claude who seemed to want to say something.

"H, huh!?"

Suddenly called out, Claude made a crazy voice.

"We are heading underground. This may be dangerous. You seem restless after hearing what Leticia said?"

"I, I thought that Leticia will be in danger, after all, she's a delicate and pretty girl. But I'm still not sure over whether or not I should go with all of you, not when that place seems to be full of danger."

Claude lowered his head.

*Fufufu, seems like he still thinks of Leticia as an ordinary girl...*

Even though he was wrong in all aspects, I didn't say anything.

“If you wish it, would you like for His Highness Claude to accompany you?”

Nigel spoke on my behalf.

“Huh? Me? But, I can’t do anything. I’ll just weigh you down...”

“That’s correct. But I believe it’ll be okay if it’s only His Highness Claude. Also, there’s something I’d like to say to you.

Moreover, if you’re truly worried about Ms. Leticia, you should follow us.”

“...”

Claude thought about Nigel’s words.

It didn’t take long for him to decide.

“I, I understand! But, there’s nothing I can do. I’ll be careful to not be a hindrance, if that’s okay with you...”

“Yes, I understand.”

Nigel smiled.

I didn’t want to increase our numbers.

However, when I saw Leticia, and then Claude who couldn’t bear to leave her alone, I decided I’d just let them be. I was still anxious about it, though.

Staying here didn’t mean that they be able escape whatever happened. If so, being with us would be safer for them.

“Leticia, I’m not going to leave you! I will protect you!”

“Okay, okay.”

Contrary to his passionate words, Claude’s legs were trembling.

Leticia snuggled up beside him with an amazed face.

I didn’t know who would be protecting whom...

“Let us go.”

“Alright.”



As such, we descended into the mysterious vault.

# Chapter 111

## Let's Reunite in the Future

As I descended down the stairs, I saw a dark and damp place.

“How long has it been?”

“The stairs seem to be endless...”

As Nigel and I walked side by side, we exchanged words.

I was positive some time had passed since we began—regardless, the stairs continued.

Overall, it was a very old place. It wouldn't be strange if the staircase were to collapse.

“There does not seem to be any traps. Still, we must not let our guard down.”

“That's right.”

The atmosphere was tense.

As we cautiously paved our way ahead...

“L, L, Leticia! I will absolutely protect you! So, you can be assured and hide behind me!”

“...There's no need for you to do that.”

The voices of Claude and Leticia could be heard from behind.

As they followed us, Claude was hiding behind Leticia.

Leticia looked appalled.

Leticia was an expert at magic. Meanwhile, Claude was an amateur at combat and couldn't use a single spell. Regardless, he was determined to protect Leticia. Although, in all actuality, Leticia should be the one protecting him.

...Nevertheless.

“It is kind of amusing.”

“I agree.”

Looking at the couple, I couldn't help but smile.

Claude's legs were trembling. He looked ready to escape at any moment. His hand stayed on the hilt of his sword.

The sword was a means of self-defense. It wasn't that sturdy, but should still suffice for combat.

Although Claude wanted to run away, his determination to protect Leticia triumphed.

“Hey! When will these stairs end!? Is the Demon King really sealed here!?”

Claude roared.

“I do not know what lies ahead us. Still, a curse, one meant to conceal something from us, is likely to be there. Imagining any other possibility is difficult.”

“I understand what Eliane is saying, but... what if there's really nothing?”

“We will decide what to do when that happens. As of the present, this is our only lead. So, it cannot be helped?”

“You're right...”

Claude still seemed reluctant.

...Regardless of anything else, I wanted to avoid the worst-case scenario at all costs.

My limited-time barrier was nearing it's time to lose its effect.

Once the barrier was no more, a full-scale war with the demons was the only thing waiting for us.

“At any rate, we must win the battle against the demons without any casualty. For that, we must prevent the resurrection of the Demon King...!”

It was when I was about to continue explaining.

I was distracted, tripped, and almost fell.

*Is it because I was walking while talking to Claude?*

However,

“Whoops.”

Nigel immediately supported me.

“Are you alright, Eliane? You have to be careful.”

“I, I am... thank you.”

I thanked him.

Nigel’s hand was both gentle and soft.

I felt happy whenever I was touched by Nigel.

But, it wasn’t the time for that.

While suppressing my feelings of bitterness, I separated myself from him.

“I don’t know what I would do if something were to happen to you.”

Nigel furrowed his eyebrows.

“You are overreacting, I merely tripped...”

“What are you saying? What if Eliane’s gorgeous face got scratched? I wouldn’t know how to take responsibility.”

“What responsibility...!? In the first place, it is not Nigel’s fault in the first place!! As I have said, you are just overreacting...!”

Nevertheless, Nigel’s kindness was conveyed to me. Nigel, who was always so gentle.

...I felt unworthy of him.

Regardless, I wasn’t going to say, *“I am unfit to be his fiancée.”* anymore.

“...”

While having such an exchange, I felt a gaze from behind.

“What’s wrong, Claude?”

“N, nothing!”

Claude turned away.

“I, it’s just...! I just think that the two of you are on good terms, and, above all... I also feel guilty!”

“...Guilty?”

“A, about my past behavior. I don’t think just an apology would suffice, but I’m glad that you’ve found a man who would take good care of you... was what I’m thinking...”

“...Claude, did you eat something weird?”

“What!? Are you trying to say that it’s strange for me to be concerned?!”

“Just kidding.”

I giggled.

Claude had changed a lot since the demon invasion.

I wish he had done so from the beginning.

At the very least, I no longer had a bad impression regarding Claude.

The problem was...

“...Hmm.”

Leticia stared at us with her arms folded. She appeared to be in a dilemma.

...As I thought, she was still unreadable.

Although she hadn’t done anything, and I didn’t feel any hostility from her...

“Anyway, let’s hurry. Surely, the stairs are almost over...”

It was when Nigel tried to continue his words.

*Rattle!*

With such a noise, I began to lose my footing.

“W, what’s that!?”

I wasn’t the only one caught in the collapse, and was about to fall over.

Leticia scrambled to catch a hold of something.

However, it was to no avail. As the ground collapsed, we had no other choice but to fall.

“Eliane!”

“Leticia!”

Nigel and Claude, not caught in the collapse, remained where they were.

At the same time, I could hear their voices.

The two desperately reached out to help us.

But—they failed. Along with the debris of the stairs, we fell.

“Ku!”

Nigel, who wanted to rescue us, attempted to jump on the spot.

However,

“Nigel! Do not worry!”

I shouted.

“With my magic, we can withstand the impact of this fall! Let us reunite in the future!”

“—!”

Nigel moved his mouth.

However, I couldn’t hear his voice due to the collapsing stairwell. He seemed to be nodding...

—As I thought, it wouldn’t be that simple.

After managing to take hold of Leticia’s hand mid-air, we continued to

fall.

# Chapter 112

## Everything I Want

Just before we hit the ground, I activated my barrier magic.

A soft air enveloped us, nullifying the fall.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes. Thank you.”

Leticia casually dusted off her clothes.

“We’ve fallen a long way.”

Even if I looked up, I couldn’t see Nigel or Claude.

Looking ahead, it seemed that a long corridor continued. The long, frustrating, stairs had ended.

Something was lying in wait for us—was what I thought.

“For the time being, shall we wait for Nigel and others to reach this place?”

“Do we have time for that?”

Leticia answered my question with a question.

“There is no point in rushing. I am also exhausted from the long staircase. Let us take a break.”

“...”

When I sat down on the nearby rubble, Leticia followed suit.

The white thighs, which extended from her short skirt, were dazzling.

Her breasts weren’t completely hidden by her clothes. Her outfit was quite revealing.

It could be said that she had a feminine charm.

I wondered if that was the reason why Claude was attracted to her...



Uh-huh. I was quite positive of it.

“...Leticia, what are you going to do?”

“What am I going to do?”

Leticia stared at me dubiously.

“...Why did you decide to come with us? I do not believe I have heard your reason, yet.”

“What? You still can’t trust me?”

“Indeed.”

Towards my honesty, Leticia laughed bitterly.

“Well, it can’t be helped, especially after everything I did. However, it seems that you already know that I’m a sorcerer.”

“...”

“You must think that I’m pretending to be your ally. No wonder you’re suspicious.”

Leticia stretched her legs.

“...I—I’ve always liked His Highness Nigel.”

“Eh?”

I was surprised by Leticia’s words.

I refused to say anything more. Perhaps because I wanted to conceal my surprise.

“Hence why, when I heard that you were about to be engaged with His Highness Nigel, my heart turned black. I wanted to destroy everyone.”

“Is that your reason?”

Leticia nodded.

“Now that I think about it, I behaved like a dolt. Even if I did that, His Highness Nigel wouldn’t turn to me, and I would just end up bringing him trouble. My shallow thoughts will only shoo him away.”

“...”

“Until now, I’ve always been granted everything I wanted. Money, prestige, men... maybe that’s the reason why.”

“...Are you telling me this so I’d forgive you?”

I was surprised at how sharp my tone was.

But, Leticia only shook her head.

“I don’t want your forgiveness. But... I envy you. Earlier, when you were flirting with His Highness Nigel, Claude looked envious.”

“I, I wasn’t flirting!”

I became embarrassed and involuntarily denied it.

She neither affirmed nor denied my words. Leticia continued her story.

“For some reason, I’m sure that Claude loves you. I thought Claude was the only thing I have, but it seems that I’ve also failed to attain him. Even though I usually got everything I wanted... I’m jealous of you, and I can’t help it...”

Leticia’s expression darkened.

Hmm... I didn’t think expect that from her. Apart from that, I didn’t think Claude loved me. I knew that from the time I was still the saint of this kingdom.

“Also, I’m indebted to you. As such, I’ve been watching you for a while, trying to repay the debt...”

“E, eh!? Could it be, the watching gaze I’ve been feeling lately is yours....!?”

“Perhaps.”

Leticia nodded.

I wondered why she wasn’t being upfront about it... I wondered for a moment—

—well, it was part of her personality, maybe.

She must have been reluctant to honestly say, “*I want to be of help.*”

“So, you were just trying to repay your debt... well, I do not believe you need to go to such an extent...”

“Well, maybe...”

When I was trying to continue my words.

“...! Leticia, look out!”

I felt an imminent danger and stood up immediately.

A white haze was charging towards us from the front.

I didn't feel it being created in the slightest...

“Is that... a curse?”

“It must be.”

Leticia also stood up and stared at the white haze.

The white haze—the curse—took a bird-like shape and attacked us.

...! I had to purify the curse!

No, wait, I wouldn't make it in time...!?

Even so, I tried to counter the curse by extending my hand forward.

“Release!”

Leticia was one step ahead.

She also extended her hand forward. Then, a black aura swirled from her palm and engulfed the white haze.

The black aura vanished along with the white haze.

“When it comes to curses, I'm second to none.”

Leticia waved her hand.

“Leticia, just now...”

“I just countered the curse with a curse. Even so, it was quite the strong curse... it's an ancient grudge... there seems to be an ancient

being who has a massive grudge, to the point it manifested long later in the future.”

Leticia concluded.

As a sorcerer, Leticia could counter a curse with a curse.

As I thought, we had to stay on guard.

“Someone who bore a grudge, could it be our enemy?”

“I’m not quite sure. I mean, it’s not the same as an offensive spell. It’s a curse that overflows from one’s body. Not just anyone can do that. But... for someone like the Demon King, it might be possible.”

“Then, as I thought...”

The Demon King was sealed in that place.

I arrived at that conclusion.

“I would like for Nigel and Claude to reach us soon—oh...”

I saw two figures going down the stairs and heading towards us.

They were Nigel and Claude.

“Great, now we can move forward.”

Nigel and Claude had caught up to us.

“Listen.”

Leticia grabbed my arm, and swiftly pulled asie.

“I always get everything I want! I won’t give up on that! But, I won’t resort to treachery anymore! I will fight you in a straightforward manner! I will fight this reality! Never forget that!”

It was a one-sided declaration of war.

After Leticia said that, she blushed. She was probably embarrassed.

“Yes. I will accept your proposition and fight. I will not let go of those who are precious to me.”

*But, Leticia, you already have one of the things you want, right?*

Claude's eyes were on Leticia instead of me...

# Chapter 113

## What I Wanted

□ Side: Claude

“W, will Leticia and Eliane really be alright!?”

The two had just fallen due to the stairs having collapsed.

Claude rushed to Nigel.

“Yes, Eliane can use barrier magic. She just assured me that they’ll be fine.”

“I, I see...”

Regardless of Nigel’s explanation, he was still anxious.

Looking at Claude, whom was trembling with anxiety, Nigel chuckled.

“Fufufu, you must love that Leticia woman a lot. Rest assured, Eliane has forgiven her. I’m sure she’ll help her.”

“I hope so...”

“Let’s go. It’ll be better if we rejoin them sooner.”

“O, okay...”

As Nigel walked ahead, Claude rushed to follow him.

*Because I chose Leticia, I ended up breaking my engagement with Eliane. I hope Eliane doesn’t resent Leticia for it...*

He inflicted that upon himself—Claude couldn’t help but think so.

“By the way, Nigel, you look pretty calm. Aren’t you worried about Eliane?”

As they walked, Claude asked Nigel.

“Worried? Well, I trust her. If she says she’ll be fine, she’ll be fine.”

“Aren’t you being too nonchalant!? Eliane is also a girl!”

That was when Claude noticed it—

—even though Nigel seemed laidback, his right fist was tightly clenched.

*...! I see, Nigel is also worried about Eliane, but is desperately holding back his feelings... He's probably doing it to keep his head clear...*

Claude, on the other hand, was just worried about Leticia and refused to see the big picture.

*His Highness the Prince of Lynchgiham...!*

He heard that Nigel was of the same age as him.

Even so, how could they end up being so different from each other?

Claude, who noticed that, was appalled.

“...I’m sorry, of course you’re also worried about Eliane. Thinking only about my own feelings was too egotistical of me.”

Claude reflected.

However.

“Hmm...? That’s not true. When I said I trust Eliane, I meant it.”

Nigel affirmed.

The more Nigel did so, the more apparent their difference became—  
—Claude felt dejected.

*...By the way, in the old days, I was often compared to His Highness Nigel.*

Claude’s tutor would always bitterly compare them.

It was said that Nigel had been called a ‘prodigy’ ever since he was a child.

At the mere age of six, Nigel became eligible to take the academy entrance exam. His swordsmanship was first-class—the knight captain admired him a lot.

Yet, Nigel also had the dignity of royalty. His etiquette was both perfect and impeccable...

*On the other hand, I... I spend more time playing than studying... it's only natural we're so different...*

Moreover, at that time, he was also indifferent towards his tutor. That resulted in her dismissal.

The more he thought about it, the more he could understand the difference between Nigel and himself.

*But... why would such a flawless man involve himself with Eliane? Maybe, he just wants her power as a saint...*

As he stared at Nigel's back, his curiosity was piqued.

When Nigel was about to jump and save her, Eliane stopped him.

Looking at Nigel's face, as he supported her, it was obvious that their feelings for each other were strong.

The appearance of Eliane when she was talking with Nigel—Claude had also never seen that before.

He was so surprised, he could only give them an odd look.

“Hey, Nigel.”

“What?”

Nigel turned around a little.

“What is your relationship with Eliane? It doesn't seem like the two of you are just friends...”

“Eliane is my fiancée.”

Claude was surprised to hear Nigel's words.

“I, is that so...? but, Eliane isn't even a noble lady. Why would you get engaged with her?”

Apart from that, because she was the ‘saint’, it was customary in Claude's kingdom for him, the prince, and her, the saint, to get engaged.

“As a member of the royal family, I also understand that wanting to stay together with your beloved doesn't suffice as a reason to get married.”



Nigel went on.

“But, Eliane is so much more than that. I believe everyone will accept my engagement with her. Also, there’s no use crying for spilled milk?”

Nigel showed a challenging smile.

Eliane was formerly Claude’s fiancée.

Therefore, it made Claude feel complicated, however...

*...How strange... as of right now, I just want Eliane to be happy.*

Claude genuinely thought so.

“Could it be, you are feeling some kind of loss over Eliane?”

Nigel turned a keen eye on Claude.

“That’s not the case! I’m all over Leticia, right now! I do feel bad about Eliane, but all I can think of is Leticia!”

“I see. I’m positive that woman also only has eyes for you.”

Nigel said gently.

Leticia.

Just by thinking about her face already made Claude happy.

*She said she’s a sorcerer... but my feelings remain unchanged.*

For some reason, her attitude had changed.

However, Claude didn’t find that unwelcome. On the contrary, it felt like he was speaking to the real Leticia.

Until now, Claude had an inkling that Leticia was wearing a mask.

...However, before his very eyes, Leticia had removed her mask.

That alone was enough to make Claude happy.

“Well, but...”

Nigel’s eyes turned sharp once again.

“Well, just in case that you indeed have feelings for Eliane, I’m not

going to lose you. Should that happen, let's compete in a healthy way."

"I don't think that will happen. Also, I don't feel like I could beat you in the unlikely event that even occurs."

"Indeed."

That said, Nigel turned his gaze away from Claude.

"...You truly love her."

Claude threw such words at Nigel who kept walking forward.

"I've gotten over Eliane properly. It's Leticia who I'm worried about—does she truly love me? I have never asked myself such a question. However, after my kingdom was invaded, Leticia changed. As such, I have no choice but to think about it..."

*Because—* Claude thought.

It was merely intuition, but Claude felt like the way Leticia gazed at Nigel was different than how she normally looks at others.

Well, in the first place, it was *Prince Nigel* from the neighboring kingdom.

However, apart from that, Claude had an impression that whenever Leticia stared at Nigel, her gaze turned warm.

*Well, Nigel is handsome, and smart... Unlike me, he has his bearings as a prince. Of course he'd be deemed more attractive.*

Claude mocked himself.

But, did Nigel see through Claude?

"I don't think that's actually the case."

"Huh"

"I think Leticia loves you. In fact, I can guarantee that."

Nigel thumped his chest.

Seeing that, Claude suddenly had an urge to laugh.

“What are you talking about? You don’t have to encourage me.”

“I’m merely stating facts.”

However, Nigel didn’t seem to be joking.

*Why would Nigel...?*

How confusing.

“Oh, look. Are they Leticia and Eliane?”

At the direction Nigel was pointing, two women could be seen waving.

Neither of them seemed to have been injured.

“T, there’s no doubt, they’re Leticia and Eliane!”

“Eliane said it, didn’t she? That they’d be fine.”

From the bottom of his heart, Nigel also seemed to be relieved.

*As I thought, Nigel was worried about Eliane...*

Honestly, Nigel didn’t feel like a real person to Claude. Especially when they were so different...

...However, when he saw Nigel’s current expression, Claude was convinced Nigel was a man, just like him.

Claude earnestly wished to become someone as competent as Nigel one day.

“Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

Claude and Nigel proceeded to the bottom of the stairs, towards Leticia and Eliane.

# Chapter 114

## Thank You

As pleased as we were with our reunion, we had to continue.

After walking for a while, we reached an open space.

To what was in the center of the room, our eyes widened.

“The Demon King...!?”

The moment I saw it, I couldn’t help but blur that out.

Before us was a massive being with both arms restrained by a chain.

The lower half of the body seemed to be buried in the floor. However, I was still amazed by its size. A single finger was about the same size as me.

The creature’s expression was pained and distorted.

It seemed to be trying to tear away the chain but couldn’t.

However, the being seemed to currently be petrified. Therefore, it didn’t make even the slightest bit of movement.

“Indeed, just by looking at it, I can tell. It’s highly possible that this is the Demon King sealed within the royal capital.”

“What a tremendous grudge... I’m sure the curse from before came from this Demon King.”

Nigel and Leticia said so in turn.

As she said, a tremendous grudge could be felt from the Demon King.

Just standing there was already making me uncomfortable. I wanted to flee right away.

Even if it was sealed, the creature was somehow able to generate such a heavy grudge. How much grudge would this world be undergoing if the creature hadn’t been sealed?

“T, there’s a woman in front of the Demon King!”

Claude shouted.

Due to the shock of encountering the Demon King, I failed to notice that there was a petrified woman before the Demon King.

The statue of the woman kneeled as she stared up at the Demon King. Her hands were tightly held together—it was as if she were praying.

“The original... saint?”

As I approached her, such words leaked from my mouth.

The petrified woman... in contrast to the Demon King, her body leaked sacred magical power.

I had never seen a magical power with such holiness.

The woman’s expression was truly saintly.

The original saint sealed the Demon King by sacrificing herself... as a result, she was still slumbering with him there...

I recalled what the Goddess had told me.

“Apparently, this is the original saint... while the other is the sealed Demon King...”

The grudge emanating from the Demon King and the sacred power from the original saint made it obvious.

“So, the Demon King is truly sealed in this kingdom...? Did we live our normal lives without knowing there is such a place underneath the castle!?”

Claude shuddered.

“It somehow makes sense... the magical power of this woman is enormous. Nevertheless, with that amount of power, she could only seal the Demon King by sacrificing herself...”

Leticia was stunned.

“Yet, it’s because she gave her all that the world has been prospering until now. It’s because of her that we were born. It’s no exaggeration to say that she is the mother of all, isn’t it?”

Nigel knelt before the original saint and put his hands together.

I touched her cheek, which was rigid, with my right hand.

A powerful force that could seal the Demon King. She was able create a barrier that could envelop the entire world.

Her power was incomparable to mine.

For generations, we had been inheriting her power.

I didn't know how many saints existed before me.

Yet, it was as if the thoughts of the all saints up until now were conveyed to me—

“—Thank you.”

The words of gratitude naturally came out of my mouth.

It wasn't just for the original saint who had sealed the Demon King, but also for the saints who had protected the kingdom and the world until now.

I sometimes cursed my fate as a saint.

Without such a power, I'd have been able to live as an ordinary girl.

But now, I felt proud for inheriting the saint's lofty goals.

Not to mention, I was able to travel the world and met Nigel—

—it was all because I was the saint.

We were lost in thought for a while, but...

“Huh!? What is that?!”

Claude pointed.

Towards where he was pointing, a piece of the original saint's head was shining.

Upon closer inspection, something akin to a thin thread was discovered. Apparently, it was a shining light.

“...Is this, hair?”

I carefully picked it up.

The Goddess also said that if I could find a remnant of the original saint, then she'd be able to make a 'path.'

"Eliane, could this be..."

"Yes, I might be able to gain the power of the original saint with this."

Towards my words, everyone's expressions brightened.

Finally,

Finally, we were able to acquire the power for standing against the Demon King.

I felt as if the Goddess and the original saint were supporting us.

Was she waiting for us?

"We made it in time..."

I felt relieved.

However, it was short-lived.

"Nigel, we need to hurry. I need to communicate with the Goddess again. The demons might attack us at any moment."

"Okay."

We stared into each other's eyes.

Like before, I tried granting the blessing of the Goddess to Nigel once again...

*"Eliane, it's urgent! Can you hear my voice!?"*

Douglas' voice echoed in my head. He was speaking to me through telepathy.

"D, Douglas, what's wrong!?"

The urgency in his voice flustered me, and it didn't seem like he'd slow down anytime soon.

"I am in the chamber where the Demon King is being sealed. The Original Saint is also here and—"

*"Is that so!? That's good news, although, a little late... come back now!"*

It happened when Douglas was about to continue.

*Dogooooooooon!*

Along with such an explosion, a massive earthquake struck the castle.

## Chapter 115

### The Demon Invasion

Due to the major earthquake, I lost my balance, and almost fell.

“Eliane!”

Nigel reached out and supported me.

“Douglas, what is happening...!?” While being supported by Nigel, I continued my exchange with Douglas.

*“The demons are attacking the royal capital! They forcibly broke through the barrier...!”*

“I, is that so!?”

I raised my voice.

*What...?*

The barrier I placed around the royal capital was limited in duration. Before the barrier disappeared, I had to acquire the power of the Original Saint.

“...The barrier should have lasted for another day.”

However, as the barrier waned, so too did its effect. There was no disputing that.

Therefore, the demons were able to break through the barrier by themselves... We had anticipated they would launch an offense at such a time.

Although, in that case, the demons would have their strength reduced.

Therefore, we concluded the demons were more likely to start attacking after the barrier had disappeared completely.

“Judging from Eliane’s reaction... could it be, are the demons



invading the kingdom?”

“That is correct.”

When I nodded, the eyes of both Claude and Leticia, who were nearby, widened.

“They sure act fast.”

Nigel’s eyes turned serious.

“Eliane, bestow upon me the blessing of the Goddess. We must communicate with the Goddess, and gain the power of the original saint.”

“I understand.”

I put my hand on Nigel’s back, and blessed him.

Nigel’s body began to glow.

The radiance was enough to fill the dim underground in pure white.

“Goddess, I have acquired the ‘path’—therefore, please help us...”

I put my hands together, as if praying.

...

.....

However, there was no response from the Goddess.

“Goddess! I have acquired the hair of the original saint! The ‘path’ has been acquired! The demons have also invaded this kingdom, so please...!”

However, no matter how desperately I called, there was no answer.

“Eliane...”

Nigel anxiously stared at me. Unlike that night, he was still conscious—which only meant one thing—the communication with the Goddess wasn’t going well.

— *why!?*

The requirements had been met! I had acquired the hair of the

original saint!

Even so... why didn't the Goddess answer?!

I couldn't conceal my impatience.

"I, it's dangerous to stay here!"

Claude raised his voice.

Certainly, as we spoke, the entire castle was shaking—rubble had started to fall.

The place would collapse at any moment.

"We have to escape from here, soon! I'm worried about what's happening outside!"

"Y, yes!"

Nigel raised his voice, bringing me back to reality.

I didn't know why I couldn't communicate with the Goddess.

...But, we didn't have the luxury of time.

The royal capital had to be in trouble with the demons unleashing a total invasion.

"Let's hurry!"

Although I was reluctant, I removed the blessing of the Goddess.

The blessing of the Goddess did give a great deal of power, but the burden on the body was also great.

Considering the upcoming battle, we couldn't waste our energy there.

"Leticia, here!"

"O, okay..."

Claude pulled Leticia's hand.

Even if Leticia was a sorcerer, she was still a pretty girl.

In contrast to Leticia, who seemed uneasy, Claude looked very determined.

Although his legs were trembling, he still held a strong will to protect Leticia—and only her.

“...Why would the Goddess...”

“Let’s think about that after we leave this place. It’s time to get out of here.”

Nigel gave me a powerful sentence to think about.

# Chapter 116

## For the Woman I Love

□ Side: Douglas

“Guh, there are too many of them...!”

In face of a large army of the demons, Douglas’ expression distorted.

Eliana’s barrier should still last for another day.

She also determined that the demons would most probably invade after the barrier had completely disappeared, but...

everyone was caught off guard.

Eliane was so powerful, everyone had full confidence in her power.

*Therefore, the demons have already factored that their power will be greatly reduced decided to force their way through the barrier... they caught us by surprise.*

As of the moment, Douglas was in his dragon form.

He flew over the royal city and dealt with the demons from above.

On the ground, the knights led by Adolf and Klaus were fighting against the demons.

The townspeople had fled, and the city was a mess.

*Previously, we got lucky. There are many undead amongst their ranks.*

However, currently, that wasn’t the case.

If Douglas were to try to annihilate them by breathing fire, he might hit his allies.

Even if that wasn’t the case, Douglas was having trouble facing the demon army as it was.

The demons weren’t a big deal. The problem was no matter how many he defeated, they just kept on coming.

No matter how much Douglas annihilated the demons, it barely made any difference.

*“You’re a dragon, so why are you siding with them?”*

A spear-wielding demon spoke to Douglas.

“Gahaha, is it that strange for a dragon to be on the side of humans?”

Douglas deflected the demon’s attack with his hard scales.

*“Dragons are sacred creatures. You’re a hassle to us demons, but we acknowledge your strength and pride. However, it seems that a once mighty dragon has fallen to the side of humans—a race that is weaker and dumber than us.”*

“Hmph! Is that all you wanted to say? Are your eyes rotten?”

While flying around the sky and fighting, Douglas thought to himself.

Douglas was born and built a nest near the kingdom where he then lived.

He had never seen his father or mother. The mothers of dragons gave birth to children at the expense of their own lives.

Moreover, Douglas didn’t live with his family like humans did. His father went somewhere long ago.

It wasn’t all that strange to him—for that was the custom of dragons.

His dull life went on.

In the old days, it seemed that some humans attempted to hunt dragons. There’d be a daily battle between the two races.

However, in a peaceful world, no one tried to go against dragons.

Well, it wasn’t like Douglas bore any ill intentions towards humans.

Therefore, he spent his dull, lonely, life in his nest.

*... That was when I met Eliane.*

They first spoke through telepathy.

Eliane was initially surprised by Douglas’ true identity... but soon, it

no longer mattered to her.

Their conversation was intriguing.

As he talked to her, Douglas' barren heart was moistened.

*Eliane has a kind heart. However, she's also oppressed by others. It wouldn't be strange for her to despise her kingdom, to think of revenge... But Eliane never considered any of that.*

Until her banishment, Eliane didn't try to leave the kingdom.

Even though the kingdom did such a terrible thing to her, she kept trying to protect everyone with her barrier.

She was a true saint.

To Douglas, Eliane was dazzling.

*"Is she the reason why you sided with humans? She's the saint. Why would you lend your power to the saint?"*

The demons, who were overwhelmed by Douglas' onslaught, asked that.

"The saint, you say... do you even know her name?"

The demons didn't reply. They probably didn't know.

"Before being a saint, she's a girl. She's kind and treats everyone equally. I fell in love with her."

Until he met Eliane, he rarely encountered humans.

Occasionally, a reckless adventurer would try to slay Douglas to make a name for himself.

Most people who saw Douglas' true form screamed and fled. Only a small few dared approach him.

They only saw Douglas as a 'dragon.' Impurities such as fear and ambition were mixed in the back of their eyes.

However, Eliane was different.

*She saw me as a man, not a dragon.*

Amongst the stories Eliane had told him, there were many he wasn't fond of.

The very first story she had told him was about her bitter daily love. Afterwards, she'd tell him about an interesting romance novel she had recently read.

Where else in the world would he find a woman that would enthusiastically talk about romance novels to him, a dragon?

Douglas initially felt strange about that, but gradually opened his heart to the pure Eliane.

*When I heard she had been banished, I felt indignant. How strange—we ended up fighting for the sake of that kingdom.*

Douglas smirked.

“Do any of you even have a woman you love?”

There was no reply.

“To me, she is the woman I'm willing to risk my life for.”

Douglas accumulated magical power in his mouth.

*...I'm starting to recall what Nigel said back then.*

*Dragon's Flame—Roar!*

He breathed out fire which proceeded to engulf the demons who were wriggling before him.

“If you aren't a man who can fulfil the selfishness of a woman you fell in love with, you aren't qualified to stand beside Eliane!”

After the flame went out, there wasn't a single demon left.

Immediately, Douglas went to the ground to resume fighting.

“Haha, what a strange thing for a dragon to say!”

A large amount of magical power was generated in front of him.

Douglas immediately turned towards it.

The empty space distorted, and a demon appeared there.

His size wasn't different from humans. He floated in the air and stared directly at Douglas.

However, the magical power and intimidation which emanated from that small body wasn't comparable to other demons.

"Are you an archdemon?"

Seeing the figure, Douglas inferred.

The archdemon nodded.

"My name is Godflor, what is yours? Let us fight."

He revealed a sword in his right hand and rushed towards Douglas.

"Hmph."

Douglas snorted and deflected the attack using magic.

"Let's stay as strangers—after all, you'll soon be reduced to charcoal."

...It seemed that it wouldn't be possible for him to rush to the ground, or Eliane, immediately.

*It'll take some time. Please bear with it, Eliane...!*

As Douglas started to fight against Godflor, he prayed for Eliane's safety.



# Chapter 117

## If you can't Become the Main Character, Withdraw

We returned to the throne room.

“What happened?!”

From outside the window, smoke could be seen rising from the entire royal capital. I saw demons attacking people, and I could hear their screams as well.

“...We missed the opportunity!” Nigel regretfully distorted his face.

“What do we do!? Eliane hasn't acquired the power of the original saint, yet!! At this rate, the Demon King will be resurrected!”

Claude said with a quivering voice.

Certainly, it was the worst possible outcome.

Although the power of the original saint seemed close to our grasp, the demons invaded before we could do anything else.

For some reason, I couldn't communicate with the Goddess. It was unknown if we alone would suffice to stop the demon invasion.

However.

“Now that it has come to this, there's no point in lamenting. We have to defeat the demons, and prevent the Demon King's resurrection at all costs.”

“That's right. Let's do what we can do for now, rather than regret what we couldn't.”

Everyone nodded at Nigel's words.

“I'm worried about the injured. With my healing magic, I should be able to treat them...”

“Alright. Eliane and the others should go to a place where there are likely to be injured people. I will stay here and guard the throne room.”

“Will you be alright on your own?”

“Of course.”

Nigel proudly flexed his bicep.

“Now is the time for us to advance. I’m sorry, Eliane, but could you once again bestow the blessing of the Goddess upon me again?”

“Alright.”

As before, I put my hand on his back and gave him the blessing of the Goddess.

However, I didn’t think I would be able to communicate with the Goddess.

During my entire way back, I was left wondering why I couldn’t talk to the Goddess even though I had obtained the

‘path.’ However, I no longer had time to ponder about it.

“Nigel, I will leave the rest to you. I shall place a barrier around this room, as well. It should last for a while.”

“Yes, thank you.”

Not even the archdemon, Baldur, could go up against Nigel.

...Regardless, I was still worried.

The blessing of the Goddess became less effective the further away I was. I had to return soon.

“L, let’s go! I will protect Eliane and Leticia!”

“What can you do, Claude? But, since you seem determined, I will help you.”

Claude’s teeth were rattling. Leticia sighed as she stared at him.

The kindness of the two made me happy.

“Thank you, Nigel. I will be back, soon!”

Upon leaving the room, angry words and screams were flying around the castle.

“Don’t let the demons invade the castle! We have to protect His Majesty the King, even if it costs us our lives!”

“Ku, but there are too many injured! Are there more healers?”

When Claude and I stepped into the room, everyone was too busy to notice us.

Injured people were lying all over the floor. It seemed that the current healers weren’t progressing much with the treatment.

“...I hope, I get to be reunited with my dead wife.”

“Hey, what are you talking about!? You aren’t dead, yet!”

A knight was bleeding. His friend desperately encouraged him.

It was a fatal injury. If the knight was left alone, he’d surely succumb to it.

However.

“Please be rest assured. Everyone will be cured— *Wide Heal.*”

I casted healing magic to the entire room.

The wounds of the people enveloped in the holy light were healed in no time.

“There seems to be more injured than we thought! Leticia, Claude, I am continuing!”

“O, okay! Even so, your healing magic is amazing... why didn’t I recognize your power in the past...”

“You’re truly the saint. Your power is the real thing.”

Claude and Leticia were both in awe and praised me.

Afterwards, we went around the castle and healed the wounded.

“Did you manage to grasp the situation?”

I wiped the sweat away from my forehead with my arm.

We reached the castle's courtyard.

Initially, the castle had been transformed into a crucible of confusion, but that situation seemed to have settled down.

"Thanks to having run around the castle, I got a general idea."

"I see."

Claude agreed with what I said.

He summarized the information he had heard. The demons invaded the kingdom a few hours ago. When the barrier started to crack, a large number of demons appeared and started attacking people.

Their goal was the castle. They most likely knew the Demon King was sealed there.

In the form of a dragon, Douglas was also desperately fighting against the demons.

The knight leaders—Adolf and Klaus, managed to intercept the demons. The number of injured was kept to a minimum.

Thanks to everyone's efforts, the battle against the demons didn't look so hopeless anymore.

But, if the demons were to receive any sort of reinforcements, the tide of the battle would change drastically...

"Hahaha, the demons don't seem like a big deal? Maybe, we can win even without using the power of the original saint?"

"Claude, don't let your guard down. Haven't you heard? The archdemons have yet to appear. The enemies we currently face are the lowest among the demons."

Leticia rebuked Claude.

"That is correct. Our objective remains the same—we will fight—"

—it was when I tried to continue my sentence.

"What is the saint doing in a place such as this?"

A voice from the sky.

When I looked up, a variant of an insect with wings was floating there.

The wings had a terrifying pattern.

It seemed to be a giant poisonous moth.

She smirked and looked down on us.

“Demon!”

Someone screamed, and all the knights raised their swords and spears in an instant.

However, the poisonous moth demon showed a fed-up expression.

“Weak guys can just die. For the time being, I have to make sure that the saint is dead.”

She fluttered her wings.

Purple scales rained from the wings and descended upon us.

...No!

I immediately had a barrier completely cover the place.

The barrier deflected the falling scales.

However, a small amount pierced through the walls. Then, like sugar candy, part of the wall dissolved.

“That is a powerful poison.”

I raised my voice.

“You will die if you touch it. Everyone, do not leave my side...!”

Everyone was confused by my face. Their expressions were distorted by fear.

The poisonous moth was ecstatic.

“Fufufu, those horrified expressions... how exquisite. No matter how long you maintain your barrier, it's over already.

Because you're facing an archdemon. I've heard that the Demon King is underneath the castle. The other archdemons should be heading

towards the Demon King around now.”

“...!”

When I heard her words, Nigel’s face came to my mind.

The demon might be bluffing, but... I highly doubted that.

She also possessed the ability to annihilate the knights in an instant. She was an archdemon—there was no questioning it.

I couldn’t leave that place due to the barrier.

But, Nigel...!

“Eliane.”

Someone put a hand on my trembling shoulders.

“Leticia...”

“Leave this place to me. I can handle it.”

Leticia kept her eyes on the poisonous moth archdemon who then declared to her.

“Oh, it seems that this kingdom’s poisonous insect has decided to make an appearance.”

The archdemon provoked her.

But Leticia wasn’t scared.

“Sure, I may be the poisonous insect of this kingdom. But, we’re the same—so, let’s dance?”

As Leticia provoked the demon back, she beckoned her by bending a finger.

The demon’s expression distorted, and she unpleasantly fluttered her wings, throwing more scales.

I immediately thought of putting up another barrier, but Leticia stopped me.

“If it’s only this, it’s okay. Don’t look down on my resolve.”

A black aura rushed out from Leticia.

The aura wrapped around the falling scales and made them disappear.

The poison had been nullified.

“N, now, that’s new, Poisonous Insect.”

“Don’t be lackluster, Poisonous Moth.”

The black emotions of the two were mixed.

“Hurry up, Eliane! What are you doing? You should go to the prince immediately! I can handle this!”

“I, I, I will be the one who protect Leticia. Go!”

Leticia and Claude said such.

“T, thank you! Leticia, please stay safe!”

“Hmph! Who do you think you’re talking to!?”

I turned on my heels, and started running for Nigel.

I was more worried about Nigel.

If the Demon King were to be resurrected, everything would be over.  
If what the demon said was the truth, I had to do something.

Leticia was a person who once inflicted doom upon Nigel and I—  
—she wouldn’t lose in such a place!

“How troublesome. Even though I’m not the main character, I’m trying to stand on the center of the stage...”

I heard Leticia’s faint voice from behind me.

# Chapter 118

## The True Saint

□ Nigel's POV:

“Guh...!”

I—Nigel, was facing an archdemon.

“Even with the blessing of the Goddess, you're still too weak. You've overestimated yourself. Because you managed to defeat Baldur, you became conceited.”

An archdemon with the appearance of a child uttered such.

This archdemon was called Philomero.

Philomero brilliantly wield his sword and slashed at me.

I was trying my best to deflect his attacks. I wasn't having much luck at counterattacking.

“With your attack this slow and inconsistent, it's actually amazing that you have time for idle chatter.”

“Hmm? Humans do say strange things. Philo can see through your lies. You can't defeat me.”

Despite my provocation, Philomena continued to effortlessly parry my attacks.

It seemed that the archdemons had infiltrated the castle. There was a high possibility that there were others.

I was worried about Eliane...

...Nevertheless, my hands were full.

I also heard that the farther away she was, the less effective the blessing of the Goddess became. After all, the blessing of the Goddess wasn't absolute.

By confronting the archdemon, I was trying to buy us some time.



“Why do you insist on getting in Philo’s way.”

Philomero asked while swinging his sword.

“Why don’t you just assist Philo in his cause? Wouldn’t that be wise? Even though it’s impossible for you to defeat Philo, for you to be able to last this long is already considered a feat. Don’t worry, Philo will explain the situation to the other archdemons.”

“Ha!”

I involuntary scoffed.

There was no way I could trust an archdemon. I also had no intention of joining their cause.

“None of you know how wonderful humans are. You don’t know how powerful they are.”

“?”

A question arose in Philomena’s eyes.

—At first, I was surprised when I heard that Eliane wanted to save that kingdom.

But, somewhere in my mind, I already knew she’d say that.

Her kingdom had terribly mistreated her.

Instead of repaying her kindness, the prince of the kingdom exiled her. It was outrageous.

Yet as of present, Eliane was the only one who could save said kingdom.

At that time, I didn’t know that the Demon King was sealed in the royal capital. If that kingdom were to perish, I wouldn’t have cared.

The same should had gone for Eliane.

However—she wanted to save it, instead.

*“For what reason do you want to save that kingdom?”*

When I heard that she wanted to save the kingdom, I was enraged for some reason.

Regardless, Eliane stared straight into my eyes and said—

*“—I understand where you’re coming from. However, regardless of how terrible the people of the kingdom have treated me, they’re still people. Some of them may not even know of my existence. I can’t bear the thought of their smiles being taken away.”*

*“But...”*

I remembered feeling bitter at that time.

I understood what she was saying. However, as for agreeing, not very much. In the end, I reluctantly nodded.

When it came to saving the kingdom, it wouldn’t be simple.

We’d need to arrange a meeting with Prince Claude and His Majesty the King.

At that time, Eliane might get hurt again...

...or so I thought.

In truth, Eliane was firm.

*“Nigel, this is what I believe—that the strong must protect the weak.”*

*“That’s right. A world where the strong oppresses the weak is useless. However, that kingdom is a different case. Just let it perish on its own.”*

*“I understand why you’d say that. However... I also have such a thought—maybe I was born for this?”*

For a moment, I couldn’t understand what Eliane was saying.

*“I was born with the power of the saint to make people all over the world happy. This power exists for me to achieve said purpose. Because that is what a true saint would do.”*

I immediately decided to argue.

Except, I was overwhelmed by Eliane’s determination.

—what a woman!

She wasn’t self-centered and prioritized people around her.

No matter how powerful she was, her goal wasn't one that could be achieved with ordinary effort.

Towards her determination, I had no choice but to relent.

*"...Alright, Eliane, I respect your will."*

*"Thank you!"*

Eliane's expression brightened.

*"However, it will be difficult for me to rescue that kingdom by myself. I'm sorry, Nigel, but will you lend me your assistance?"*

*"...!"*

At that time, it was as if electricity coursed through my body.

Eliane was asking for my help.

Even though until then, she had been trying to shoulder everything by herself. Perhaps, had the incident involving Baldur not occurred, she'd had headed to the kingdom by herself without consulting me. After all, that would have been faster than persuading me.

But she turned to me.

I was overjoyed because of that.

*"Of course, Eliane. I will be your sword and shield."*

Hearing that, Eliane smiled like a flower.

...Thus, the current situation.

"You truly are so conceited that you're incapable of looking beyond yourself. On the other hand, the saint is trying to save everyone!"

"That's just foolish. Why do I have to make other people happy? I don't understand."

"I knew you'd say that. It isn't like I want you to understand—!"

"What!? You've become stronger...!?"

When I pushed Philomero back with my sword, his face twisted for the first time.

When I was thinking of Eliane, a mysterious power rose up from within me.

*“Nigel, just a bit more. I will lend you my power.”*

I could see an illusion of Eliane holding my hand within hers.

“I can’t lose to any of you! I have to protect those who are precious to me! No matter what obstacles stand in front of me, I won’t back down!”

When I saw Philomero staggering, I took the opportunity to lunge my sword at him.

Philomero, who got slashed, splattered black blood that fell to the floor.

“N, no way... how could you surpass me...”

Philomero stuttered.

However, I didn’t let go of my sword.

...*What?*

*What is this terrifying magical power?*

*Where on earth is it coming from?*

“Well done, Philomero. You managed to wear down the saint’s follower this far.”

An evil voice.

From the floor where Philomero was lying on...

...From below, a hand extended.

Somebody appeared from the floor and tried to absorb Philomero into his body.

“I won’t let you!”

I was confused. A second demon had appeared. Moreover, judging from the situation, it was highly possible this was a senior demon.

I immediately swung my sword and tried to attack it.

However, that being avoided my attack easily and stood before me while holding Philomero.

“Enough dilly-dallying. I shall get rid of him.”

Philomero’s body sank and disappeared into the demon who had just appeared.

The next moment, the demon narrowed the distance between us and overtook me.

# Chapter 119

## How Frustrating. I'll Never Forgive you

When I reached the throne room, I saw Nigel being lifted up by a demon.

“Nigel!”

While saying that, I immediately tried to run up to him.

However, the demon only grinned.

“Why if it isn’t the saint... However, you’re a bit late. I’ve already absorbed the magical power that was bestowed upon this man. This man is already gone.”

The demon tried to break Nigel’s neck.

However—

“Uooooooooogh!”

Nigel screamed and struggled to break free from the demon.

In an instant, the demon was frightened. I didn’t miss the chance to hit the demon with all my might.

“...Hmm. How annoying.”

My attack didn’t do anything.

However, I was able to distract him at the last minute.

Nigel broke free from the demon.

He held his throat and coughed painfully.

“What on earth are you going to do? Do you think you can survive?”

The demon wore a regal cloak. He was twice as large as me.

However, I wasn’t scared. Instead, I stared back at him as I tried to support Nigel.

“You’re all finished. I have all the keys.”

“...The keys?”

“To revive the Demon King.”

The demon spoke with arrogance.

“I absorbed Philomero—an archdemon—into my body, and also the Goddess’ blessing. With this amount of magic, I will be able to revive the Demon King at the expense of myself.”

After saying that, the demon turned his back on us.

“Come, the festival is about to begin. Fighting against a saint is a waste of magical power. I don’t have time for you.”

The demon descended under the throne—to the room where the Demon King was sealed.

*No!*

“Eliane! This is bad! Stop him!”

Nigel also reached out, but it was to no avail. He could barely move.

I wanted to cast a healing spell on him but decided against it.

I could do that later.

The current priority was to stop that demon.

I couldn’t make a mistake!

“I won’t let you go!”

I set up a barrier in front of the demon in an attempt to stop him.

“You’re such a pain.”

The demon reached out and tried to destroy the barrier.

Refusing to lose, I increased the strength of the barrier, however—

*—no, at this rate, it will be destroyed!*

“W, what are you trying to achieve?”

I extended both of my hands forward.

As I tried to strengthen the barrier, I spoke to the demon.

“A lot of people will die! Don’t you feel guilty!? Are you alright with that?”

“Do you even need to ask? Of course, I’m alright with it. You’re the odd one in the first place.”

The demon continued without pause.

“You received horrible treatment from this kingdom, and yet, you returned to save it. It’s really strange. What do you gain from it?”

I wanted to argue, but I couldn’t muster a word.

“See? You’re the strange one. Once the Demon King is resurrected, you will tremble with all your might. Then, you will be desperate to protect your own life... mark my words.”

“Aah!”

*Parin—!*

Glass could be heard shattering and we were blown back by the shock wave.

I immediately stood up to stop the demon, but he had already disappeared.

He most likely went to the place the Demon King was sealed.

Fear filled my body.

I was stunned and stood there in a daze, but...

“Eliane! We have to chase him right away! We can’t let the Demon King be revived!”

Nigel’s voice brought me back to reality.

“B, but, Nigel, you’re injured...”

Maybe it was due to the fierce battle... Nigel suffered a lot of injuries.

He was bleeding, and he had trouble standing.



Even though I casted a healing spell, it didn't mean I could erase his fatigue.

It was impossible to completely heal Nigel, especially considering the fact that I had exhausted my magic.

However...

"It's okay! If we don't go, this kingdom—no, the world will end! I won't allow him do what he wants, even if it costs me my life!"

Despite his grievous wounds, Nigel tried to chase after the demon.

What he said was understandable.

Nevertheless, I wanted him to rest. But, as of the present, without Nigel, I wouldn't be able to stop that demon.

That was why.

"...I understand! Let's move!"

I made up my mind and chased the demon with Nigel.

While descending the stairs...

"Nigel... I'm frustrated. That demon has no regard towards human life! Such an evil being... I can't forgive him!"

"My thoughts are the same, Eliane! We will definitely stop him!"

"Yes!"

Nigel pulled my hand as we rushed to the bottom of the stairs.

The warmth of his hand naturally gave me courage.

# Chapter 120

## The True Saint Will Never Lose

\*Side: Douglas

“As expected of a dragon. It seems that I can’t defeat you.”

The archdemon, Godflor, had fought against Douglas.

He laid on the ground, and looked up towards Douglas who had taken human form.

“*Fuun*. I’m not someone who plans far ahead. I just prefer to think that I could win.”

Douglas snorted.

That said, he wasn’t free of injuries.

Dragons had a high regeneration power, so they weren’t a problem, but... the injury on his chest was bleeding. There were also injuries in other areas. However, he stayed optimistic.

The surrounding buildings had collapsed. The people and other demons fled from Douglas. There was an eerie tranquility.

*I didn’t think I’d waste so much time over this guy... for a demon, he was quite tough.*

As Douglas stared at Godflor, whom was breathless and half death, he contemplated such.

“I have no choice but to admit it... your heart is rotten, but you’re formidable. If you’re reborn, I want to face you again.”

“*Ha*, I sure hope so.”

A dry laugh leaked from Godflor’s mouth.

“It’s a shame. I don’t think your grand scheme will ever come to fruition. The knights are excellent. They won’t lose to some random demons—well, except for archdemons.”

In truth, after the demons began their total attack, they were struggling till the last minute.

Of course, everyone benefitted greatly from Douglas' support. A few weeks ago, the kingdom would've perished from the first demon invasion, for sure.

The reason for their success was that everyone was able to join forces in face of the threat of demons.

However.

"Hmph, don't underestimate demons. My failure was within the realm of expectation."

Godflor's expression distorted.

"I was here for the purpose of buying time—and that's exactly what I did. Even if I lose, the Chancellor will prevail."

"What do you mean?"

Douglas asked.

The next moment, night had fallen.

"!?"

Douglas reflexively looked up towards the skies. He was at a loss for words.

Godflor, who was also staring at the skies, smiled in satisfaction.

"It's the beginning of the end! You and the human race are finished! *He* is finally resurrected!"

"By 'He', do you mean the Demon King? What did you do!?"

"..."

Douglas asked, but Godflor gave him no answer.

His life seemed to have finished.

"Eliane...! Are you alright?! Eliane?! Please respond!"

Douglas spoke through telepathy to Eliane. However, he didn't hear

anything.

“She isn’t in a state where she can afford to use telepathy... what the hell is going on...”

Because of the fatigue from the battle, Douglas suddenly crumpled to the ground.

He tried to get up quickly, but it was to no avail.

“Even though I’m perfectly fine, I can’t go to help them straight away... Eliane, Nigel, be safe!”

As of the present, Douglas had no choice but to pray for their safety.

\*Side: Leticia

“...How persistent, but it’s finally over...”

The battle with the archdemon Philomero was finally over.

All the injured people in the courtyard had been safely evacuated.

Seeing that Philomero had disappeared, Claude supported Leticia, who was breathing heavily, with his shoulder.

“Leticia, you’re so powerful! I’m sorry for being useless!”

Claude regretted his lack of power.

*Well, to be honest, he helped distract the demon by moving around a bit...*

When Leticia fought against Philomero. Claude tried to help her by throwing stones at the archdemon.

However, there was no way the archdemon would falter at such a thing.

As a result, Leticia had to fight while protecting Claude. Basically, the battle was prolonged.

Perhaps Claude himself knew that—his face was tinged with regret.

“Hey, you.”

Leticia said.

“Do you know who I am? I was born from a family with dingy blood. I

was born as a sorcerer, and I have the power to curse and kill my opponents.”

She had been wearing a false mask to achieve her goals.

She lied and didn’t show her true nature.

But... what Leticia said was the truth. That wasn’t a lie.

*Claude will probably hate me after this... there’s no way anyone would like a sorcerer...*

—‘Disgusting!’

—‘Stay away from me!’

It was a story from before Leticia had awakened her innate talent as a sorcerer.

Born into a family of sorcerers, her family used to abuse her.

Being a sorcerer generally was not a very commendable position.

They were hated and deemed as creepy by most.

Therefore, Leticia believed that Claude would also be terrified of her.

However, contrary to Leticia’s expectations—

—Claude raised his voice.

“So what?! I love you regardless of who you are! I love your heart! No one should hate you for something like that!”

Ah—

Hearing that, the fog that shrouded her heart disappeared.

*Yes... those might be the words I have been waiting to hear...*

Regardless of who she was.

Regardless if she was a sorcerer.

To be loved regardless of anything.

Leticia might had just been looking for such a man.

Claude's face, which she barely looked at before, looked cooler than anyone else's—even Nigel.

*Hmm... I'm stupid, too. Only now did I learn how to not judge a book by its cover...*

“Le, Leticia?!”

Claude was in a panic.

Leticia had entrusted her full weight to him.

“Are you alright, Leticia?! Don't dieeeeeeeeeeeeeee!”

Claude's sorrowful voice penetrated the sky, to which Leticia opened her eyes and said.

“Too bad, I won't die that easily. I'm a pretty headstrong woman. However, I'm just a little tired... can you lend me your chest, Your Highness?”

Leticia laughed—

— *it turns out that I can laugh like this, too.*

Her mind was swimming because she had used too much power...

“Well... I'll leave the rest to others. I fought as well as—!?”

However, Leticia noticed something unusual, and her eyes widened.

It was the same with Claude.

Suddenly, the sky was engulfed in darkness.

“What happened? A new demon...?”

“No, this is...”

—Evil.

It was very similar to the atmosphere she felt in the dungeon containing the Demon King.

It was an unpleasant, unrelenting, grudge.

“Are Eliane and Nigel safe? At this rate...”

“They’ll be alright, you worry too much.”

Leticia continued firmly.

“It’s alright if it’s her—because she’s the true saint.”

# Chapter 121

## A Recurring Disaster

When we reached the bottom of the basement, we discovered the demon praying before the Demon King.

“I won’t let you!”

Nigel drew his weapon and slashed at the demon... but, his attack was blocked by something like an invisible barrier. It never reached the target.

“It’s too late! Tremble in place as you watch!”

Evil magical power emanated from the demon.

That magical power then enveloped the Demon King.

The stone layer covering the Demon King began to crack. He was gradually being revived.

“We did it!”

The demon spread his arms with an ecstatic expression on his face.

I also tried to interfere with the demon, but as he said, it was too late.

I placed multiple barriers around the Demon King.

However, my barriers were destroyed by the evil magical power. They didn’t work.

The Demon King slowly moved his limbs.

Every time he moved a little, he’d hit the surrounding walls and the ground, causing a tremor.

“My name is Pewiz!”

In front of the resurrected Demon King, a demon named Pewiz spoke.

“I lead the demons in your absence! But now, it’s your time! Therefore —huh...?”



However, Pewiz' words were cut off.

The gigantic Demon King had grabbed Pewiz.

“Demon King, why!?”

There was a question in Pewiz' eyes.

However, the Demon King didn't answer. Instead, he opened his large mouth.

Just like a child chewing on sweets, he threw Pewiz into his mouth.

His death couldn't even be heard, because it happened instantly.

“The magical power of that Demon King, will it continue to increase...?”

Nigel stared dubiously at the appearance of the Demon King.

The Demon King, who had eaten Pewiz, smiled with satisfaction.

To him, was Pewiz akin to breakfast?

Pewiz absorbed the power of an archdemon, along with the Goddess' blessing Nigel had received. Therefore, Pewiz should be a good sustenance.

“More importantly, the Demon King has been resurrected. He mustn't leave this place. We must keep him here.”

“But how?!”

Due to the worsening situation, I inadvertently raised my voice.

*Guoooooooooooo—!*

The Demon King roared.

The Demon King shook his arms as if trembling with joy from awakening.

The Demon King, who was larger than a dragon, could already bring forth a massive disaster just by moving.

In front of the resurrected Demon King, my barrier magic was useless. No matter how many I put up, they were destroyed by the Demon

King as if they were made of glass.

“What should I do...”

“Eliane, is that...?”

When I was appalled, Nigel’s gaze turned towards my chest.

“Isn’t that... the hair of the Original Saint?”

It happened the next moment.

The hair of the Original Saint, which I had kept in my bosom, moved by itself and flew towards the Demon King.

The hair grew longer, and tied up the Demon King as it was.

*Guooooooooo—!*

The Demon King roared sorrowfully.

However, it felt like it was saying, “*What an annoying bug!*”

The Demon King was trying to tear off the hair that was restraining him. The hair was then cut sharply.

“I don’t think the hair will restrain him for long...”

I also nodded at Nigel’s words.

The area was about to collapse under the Demon King’s rampage in his effort to escape the restraint.

Due to the earthquake, rubble also fell from above.

“If we stay here any longer, we’ll be buried alive. Nigel, we should escape from here right away!”

“Alright!”

While looking down at the struggling Demon King, we ran up the stairs.

“I hope the Demon King ends up buried alive as it is...”

“You hope. Even if he does get buried alive, he’ll surely crawl out.”

“Indeed.”

The Demon King had finally been revived.

My barriers didn't work, either.

Everyone else was exhausted from the battle with the demons. As such, they wouldn't be able to fight at all.

There was no other way.

The situation was so dire that it was hopeless.

—the world would be destroyed as it was.

Even so, when I tried to find a way out—

“—Ah!”

I screamed.

The stairs under my feet collapsed, and both Nigel and I fell.

“Eliane!”

Nigel scrambled to grab my hand.

“Never let go of my hand!”

\*\*\*

On the other hand, Douglas suddenly wondered what was happening in the darkening kingdom...

“Douglas!”

A loud voice.

When he turned around, there he saw the Spirit King, Philip, and Vincent. Ralph, the pet of the royal castle, was also approaching him.

“What the hell is going on?”

Vincent asked.

“I don't know. The demons invaded the kingdom—we tried our best to stop them, but suddenly, this happened...”

“Did Eliane fail?”

Philip asked such a question.

Douglas' face twisted as he shook his head.

"I don't know that, either. Eliane hasn't answer my telepathy. Judging from the situation, it's only natural to think that she didn't make it in time."

Douglas noticed Vincent's sword.

It was a shining sword. A huge amount of magical power could be felt from the sword. Even Douglas couldn't grasp how strong the sword actually was.

*This sword, I've seen it before...*

When Douglas rummaged through his memories...

"That's right, when Philip and I stopped by the castle, the sword I had stored there suddenly glowed and started a racket."

Vincent answered.

"This is the sword that was being kept in the spirit village for a long time. I entrusted it to Eliane..."

"...That rusty sword in the spirit village? Is it really the same sword?"

It was a sword that had been passed down for generations amongst the spirits. It had been kept in an old box.

At that time, Douglas forcibly opened the box, and Philip entrusted it to them as a way to express his gratitude.

*What is it, now...*

Douglas asked some questions, but Philip only tilted his head.

"But... I think it makes sense for the sword to awaken at a time like this. Afterwards, I got in the back of Fenrir and came here in order to give it to Eliane and the others..."

It was in the next moment—

—the mysterious sword trembled and began to float.

"What is happening!?"

Vincent, someone who was always clam, raised his voice.

The mysterious sword floated in the air for a while, trembled again, and finally flew off into the sky.

*That's... the direction of the royal castle?!*

The sword continued to increase in speed as it went straight towards the royal castle.

“I don’t know... this is...”

“I also don’t know. But one thing is certain—we have to entrust everything to that sword and Eliane. It’s beyond the scope of our capability.”

If the Demon King completely revived... our original plan would collapse.

Then, it could be said that as of the present, this was the worst-case scenario.

However, when he saw that mysterious sword, he felt a sense of security.

The sword seemed to have a mission to save Eliane and others—it was gleaming with divine light.

The light became even stronger and illuminated the kingdom which was covered in darkness.

# Chapter 122

## I Want to see Everyone Again

We were falling towards the Demon King.

The roar of the Demon King echoed. The collapse of the castle couldn't be prevented.

There was no way for us to prevail against the Demon King...

*Is my life flashing before me?*

The faces of the people I had met resurfaced one after another.

Claude and Leticia.

The two of them behaved unpleasantly towards me, but I was glad that they finally changed for the better.

Without Leticia, I might not have been able to reach that place due to the poisonous moth demon.

Douglas.

Our friendship started through telepathy.

However, he chased me to Lynchgiham and decided to live with us.

Douglas, who loved mischief, was a bit troublesome—

—regardless, the days I spent with him were entertaining.

Cecily-chan, and Ralph-chan...

They were both adorable, while Ralph was also fluffy.

As I was getting ready to leave the royal capital, Cecily showed a glimpse of maturity. She seemed to know what we were setting out to do. That was quite surprising.

The people who lived in the royal castle.

Adolf, the leader of the knights. Philip, the Spirit King. Vincent, and also the maid, Abby. Robert, the director of the institute... Klaus, the

knight captain of the royal capital...

Various people had helped me so far.

Why did they do so much for me?

Was it because I was a saint?

...That wasn't it.

In the beginning, that might had been the case.

However, they weren't biased.

“Eliane, don't give up! Believe in victory until the end!”

As we fell, Nigel declared that.

*That's right...! I can't give up...!*

*I want to meet everyone again!*

Hence, I couldn't die in such a place!

“This light is...!?”

Nigel raised a confused voice.

The power of my will became magical power, and light eventually spread underground.

*Is that...?*

Looking up, a sword descended towards us.

“This is...”

Nigel seemed confused by the sudden appearance of the sword.

The sword appeared before us, as if it were a guide. Furthermore, it shined with even more brilliance.

At the same time—our fall slowed.

“It's... the rusty sword we've received from Philip?”

There was no mistake.

I was surprised for a moment due to the bright shine from sword. I couldn't believe it was the same sword as that time.

It felt terribly nostalgic.

Nigel naturally grabbed the sword with his left hand. It was as if the sword belonged to him since the very start.

While doing that, our bodies slowly descended toward the Demon King.

"It feels strange. Power seems to be emanating from my body."

"Really?"

"Yes. It feels similar to when Eliane bestowed the blessing of the Goddess upon me. No, it's even stronger..."

It was then—

—golden light was glowed from Nigel's body.

The feeling was similar to the blessing of the Goddess—no, it was even stronger, as Nigel said!

"Nigel! Are you alright!?"

"Yes, I'm fine. Don't worry."

Nigel didn't seem to be injured or anything.

On the contrary, his wounds gradually healed.

Nigel seemed more energetic than ever before.

— *what is happening!?*

When I was confused...

*"Saint Eliane, can you hear me? Finally... prepare yourself—"*

I heard the same female voice from that night.



# Chapter 123

## The Best Happy Ending—!?

“Goddess...?”

I couldn’t see her.

However, when I asked, I felt like the Goddess had nodded.

*“You did well. The key was the remnant of the Original Saint—and the other was this sword.”*

“Sword... you mean, the sword I received from Philip, the Spirit King?”

*“Indeed.”*

The voice of the Goddess was crisp, unlike last time.

The Goddess was trying to tell me something.

That wasn’t the only difference...

“Eliane... seems to be communicating with the Goddess... I am also retaining my consciousness. I can hear the Goddess’

voice.”

Nigel remained conscious.

What was more, he was able to hear the voice of the Goddess.

Was my confusion apparent?

*“The ‘path’ has been completely erected. Last time I spoke with you, it was still incomplete.”*

The Goddess added.

— *Guoooooh!*

An evil roar.

Underneath, the Demon King was rampaging, trying to tear off the

hair.

It was only a matter of time.

Once the Demon King was freed, the entire castle would collapse.

We were in a pinch.

However, my despair had vanished.

*“This sword was used by the original saint long ago.”*

The Goddess continued.

*“It’s a divine sword, one commonly used by gods. However, the original saint couldn’t wield the sword and entrusted it to the ancient Spirit King, instead.”*

“But why? Wasn’t she so great that this kind of sword shouldn’t matter at all?”

*“The original saint fought alone. As such, my power was beyond her control. However, the current saint—you, has someone alongside her. Therefore, my blessing will be suitable, and I can empower you.”*

Eventually, we returned to where we were earlier, and we slowly placed our feet on the ground.

Nigel and I were looking up at the rampaging Demon King.

*“The original saint had almighty power. But... it wasn’t perfect, so she couldn’t seal the Demon King.”*

While the Goddess explained, Nigel held his sword as he stared at the Demon King.

He was akin to the hero that appeared in fairy tales.

*“But you’re different... you aren’t alone. You were able to find a partner that is perfectly suited to the blessing of the Goddess. This is something not even the original saint was able to do—and now...”*

Nigel gripped his sword.

*“You can defeat the Demon King.”*

“Haaaaaaaaa—!”

Nigel went straight for the Demon King and jumped at the speed of light.

When he reached the Demon King's head, he swung his sword.

— *Guoooooh!*

The Demon King screamed sorrowfully.

Light diffused and dyed our surroundings pure white.

Nigel's sword slashed the Demon King's body into half.

"Nigel!"

While calling his name, I rushed towards Nigel.

The moment he landed on the ground, the Demon King exploded.

The fact that the Demon King had such a mighty power and sank us into the abyss of despair felt like a lie.

He was no longer terrifying.

The fragments of the Demon King were purified by the holy magic and shattered.

They drifted in the air, turning into snowflakes of light as they fell upon us.

"Are you alright!?"

"Yes. My body feel so light."

Nigel put away his sword as he gently replied to me.

Nigel felt very dear to me, and before I realized it, I was hugging him with all my might.

"We... defeated the Demon King, right?"

"That's right, the moment I grabbed this sword, the Demon King becomes as weak as a baby."

...The Goddess didn't deny our words, either.

It seemed that the Demon King had disappeared.

“This is all thanks to Eliane. Without you, I wouldn’t have been able to defeat the Demon King.”

“No, no, I’m unworthy of your compliment, without Nigel, I—!”

“What are you saying, you are—!”

Nigel and I kept praising each other.

“Fufufu.”

“Ha, hahaha!”

In such a situation, we couldn’t help but laugh.

The conclusion to the ultimate battle was brief.

Originally, I wanted the power of the original saint to surround the world with a barrier.

However, things had taken an unexpected development.

But—that was the best happy ending!

“—ane? *Can you hear me? Are you safe?*”

When I was laughing with Nigel, Douglas’ voice arrived through telepathy.

“Yes, I’m safe.”

“Is that so? That’s good. I was worried because it was hard to reach you through telepathy.”

“I’m sorry, it took a while.”

“*Heh, I see.*”

Douglas said gently, but he sighed.

*“It seems that I worried too much. However, if something were to happen to you, I’d lose my reason to live.”*

“Y, you’re exaggerating.”

*“I’m not.”*

Douglas flatly denied my words.

*“So, how did it go?”*

“Everything went well. I shall explain the detail after I get back. Various things happened, but we were able to defeat the Demon King.”

*“What!? Well, I thought as much...”*

“Really?”

*“Indeed, after Philip’s sword suddenly flew towards the castle, the demons in the city disappeared.”*

*The sword that Philip brought...*

...Philip also came to help us.

“Is that so? I have to express my gratitude directly to Philip later. Even so, have the demons truly disappeared?”

*“I don’t know, but, either way—it worked. We won the battle—victory is ours.”*

Douglas’ voice amplified my happiness.

Ah... it was truly over.

The long battle, which begun with the annulment of my engagement and exile...

*“What’s wrong, Eliane? You’re suddenly quiet.”*

“No, it is nothing. Now that everything is done, there is no point in talking though telepathy like this. I shall return soon.”

*“I shall wait.”*

Douglas said so at the end and cut off the telepathy.

“Eliane, is Douglas safe? I never thought I’d worry about him.”

Only I could hear the telepathy with Douglas.

Nigel asked anxiously.

“Yes, there seems to be no problem. It seems that Philip is also in the royal capital.”

“That’s good. I defeated the Demon King, but the city is in shambles... it leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.”

“That’s right. Come on, let us hurry back. Surely, you want to see them, too.”

“True.”

Nigel nodded and took my hand.

I felt like a princess being escorted to a party.

But, how were we to return?

The stairs had completely collapsed. Walking back seemed impossible.

Was it possible to fly with the sword?

Or would it be better to ask Douglas to come pick us up?

It was when I was contemplating about it—

—Furaa.

“That’s?”

Suddenly, I felt as if blood was drained from my body.

What happened...?

My consciousness gradually faded—it was a floating, fluffy, sensation.

“Elia—!!!”

The voice of Nigel, who should’ve been near me, felt very far away.

*“As a saint, you’ve used too much power...”*

The voice of the Goddess.

I tried to reply, but couldn’t muster an answer.

*“At this rate, you’re going to...”*

*I’m going to...?*

*What will happen to me?*

It was as if my body wasn't mine. I couldn't move at all.

After my vision was dyed pure white, my body gradually fell.

## Chapter 124

The Things that Change, The Things that don't Change (Claude's POV)  
Without realizing it, a year had passed since the battle against the Demon King.

"Your Highness! This is also incorrect! A problem of this level is something you should be able to finish by now!"

The Kingdom of Verclaim.

The voice of rebuke echoed within the royal castle.

The soldiers walking in the corridor murmured, "*Again...*"

However, the scolding wasn't done with the intent of humiliating the person, but that of a parent looking after a child.

The source of that voice came from a certain room.

"As it is, you will never beat the prince of the neighboring kingdom...!"

"N, no way..."

A strict woman wearing glasses was scolding a man.

The man, whom was facing the table, showed a difficult expression.

The man was none other than the first prince of the Kingdom of Verclaim—Claude Verclaim.

"Well, I can't help it, I haven't studied properly until now..."

Claude, who was unhappy, rebutted.

His hair was a little shorter than a year ago.

"That's why getting a decent score on the test will be difficult."

"Stop making excuses! Now that I've returned, I'll give my utmost to teaching Your Highness! Be prepared—within three years, you shall surpass His Highness Nigel!"

“That’s impossible...”

When Claude tried to argue, the woman showed a stern look.

*I, I’m scared... I can’t argue against her...*

Claude trembled, and looked down at his book again.

Since then—

—while the Demon King and the demons had been subjugated, the damage to the royal capital was enormous.

The fear carved into the hearts of the people wouldn’t heal so easily.

But—the miraculous thing was—no one died in the previous battle.

Everyone had survived.

Of course, there were many who were grievously injured, but nothing life-threatening.

Despite engaging in a full-scale war with the demons, the result was miraculous.

“...Because you re-hired me, I thought you reformed. Looks like that isn’t the case. Well, at least your habit of skipping class has been fixed...”

The woman spoke to Claude while clenching her teaching materials.

The woman had previously been ordered to serve as Claude’s tutor.

But, because of her strictness, Claude dismissed her.

*I have to catch up with Nigel... It’ll be a little difficult, but I’ve gotten stronger!*

Claude thought such while running his brush over his notebook—

—to catch up with Nigel.

Such was his goal.

However, it was impossible to do so with half-hearted efforts. Nigel probably did his best in his studies.

Therefore, Claude required a good educator.



Thus, Claude re-hired his former tutor.

After she had been dismissed, she began living a life of self-reliance cultivating fields in some remote area.

Claude fully believed she wouldn't return.

Using the power of his authority, Claude could have simply force her to return, but he didn't want to do that...

...Thus, Claude went straight to her and bowed to her.

*"It can't be helped. I shall raise Your Highness Claude to be a magnificent future king!"*

She was strangely motivated and gave an immediate answer.

The result was as such.

"Hey..."

"What is it?"

When Claude tried to speak, she answered sternly.

Terrified, Claude spoke with a quivering voice.

"I'm sorry—I just want to express my thanks. You're always thinking about me, right? I'm sorry for being such an incompetent student."

Claude apologized.

The woman was surprised for a moment.

But soon, her face turned bright red.

"O, of course, how unlike you, Your Highness Claude! Your Highness Claude has improved compared to before! A, am I too strict? It can't be helped, it might be time for a snack..."

She was bashful.

*This is my first time seeing this side of her...*

If he observed people well, he could see many sides to them.

Until now, Claude had been narrowminded.

That was why, he was quick to anger and couldn't even notice such awkward tenderness.

Claude resumed his studies while studying her expression and thinking such.

His lesson ended.

He wanted to rest, but Claude forced himself to partake in a meeting with the ministers.

“—Such is the case.”

“—we might be able to restore the economy.”

“—more than that, help the lives of the people.”

The conference room was filled with technical terms, and Claude was about to doze off.

However, while expanding his dictionary, Claude managed to partake in the discussion.

*First of all, I have to be able to understand what they're discussing... otherwise, I won't be able to take part in the national policy...*

With that in mind, Claude forced himself to attend the meetings.

His past self wouldn't have done so. Listening to the ministers made him sleepy. Therefore, he didn't even try to listen.

Thus, he ended up being a bother.

When he remembered that, he felt ashamed of himself.

“Although the saint and the prince of the neighboring kingdom have defeated the Demon King, it's important to prepare for the future. In other words...”

Amidst the meeting, the topic of the saint came up—

—of course, that saint was Eliane.

*Today marks a year since that final battle... It's been exactly one year since Eliane left us...o* When he thought of her face, he felt lonely.

Since that day, there had never been a day when he didn't think about

Eliane.

But—more than Eliane, Claude's mind was filled with another woman  
—

—which was...

*...Leticia disappeared, too. Where is she? What is she doing right now?*

That was right.

The day after the final battle, Leticia disappeared. She left him a letter.

*"It's because I'm unworthy of you."*

The letter contained such a short sentence.

When Claude saw that, he was depressed.

*What does she mean!?*

*I love her!*

He wanted a future with her...

...Even so, where on earth did she disappear to...?

However, Claude didn't have time to be depressed.

*I'm sure Leticia knows I'm working hard...*

As of the present, he also didn't have the courage to go see Leticia.

But one day, once he became a man who could make her and Eliane proud, he'd court Leticia.

At that time, even if meant going through water and fire, even if it meant going to the depths of hell—he would take Leticia's hand without hesitation.

Thus, Claude made a firm decision.

Hence why, over the past year, Claude had been giving his damndest, no matter how tough it was.

"Your Highness Claude?"

One of the ministers beckoned to him.

“What do you think, Your Highness Claude? About the reconstruction of the city...”

Claude hurried to answer the question.

In the past year, they had been rebuilding the royal capital at a remarkable rate.

But there was still had a long way to go to return the capital to its former state.

*...The citizen's lives are the top priority. They have to be in a kingdom where they can feel safe.*

Claude's expression turned firm as he continued—

“—A, as for me...”

“—It's too salty! I thought I've measured the salt properly? Why is it so salty?! Why is cooking so difficult!?”

—a corner of the royal capital.

A high-pitched female voice echoed within the girl's academy.

Although the voice was considerably loud, the people of the academy were accustomed to it and didn't seem to care much.

“Ugh... but I have to do my best. I still can't meet Claude like this...”

A woman was wearing an apron.

She remained alone in the home economics room, practicing her seasoning.

The woman was Leticia.

That was right, Leticia hadn't left Claude.

She just decided that she had to be worthy of Claude and was attending a decent bridal school.

*I, I've been too naïve until now... I thought my magic would solve everything for me... I have to train myself!*

Although frustrated, Leticia regained her spirits.

The academy wasn't actually that far from the royal castle.

If Claude were to take the matter seriously, he'd find Leticia easily.

However, she opted not to tell Claude.

Their surroundings also kept their mouths shut. It was both for the sake of maintaining Claude's motivation—and also for fun.

Of course, Claude and Leticia didn't know that.

*I've been fooling around until now. This time, I will get what I want in a straightforward manner. That's why, I can't stop now!*

Leticia's fighting spirit reignited.

The girl named Leticia had the blade of a grudge in her heart.

Although her face was pretty, she exuded a tense aura.

But as of the present, she had a refreshing look, as if that aura had been removed.

She no longer faked being a bubbly, flirtatious, girl.

As of the present, she was focused on the matter at hand. Her intention was only one—to cook for her beloved.

# Chapter 125

## The World's Peace (Philip's Perspective)

"It's been a year since then."

"That's right."

The spirit village, Philip's house.

Vincent was having a conversation with the Spirit King, Philip.

"How quickly the time flies..."

"...The last year has been turbulent. It's no wonder you feel that way."

Both spoke without changing their expressions.

*Speaking with this guy makes me feel irritated... I feel like I'm looking at myself...*

Inwardly, Philip thought such as his expression twisted.

That year.

After the Demon King was defeated, the world gradually resumed its course.

*The Kingdom of Verclaim was originally hostile to other nations, to the point it wouldn't be strange for them to suddenly declare war on them.*

Philip thought.

*But... ironically, by joining forces with Lynchgiham to defeat the Demon King, their hearts have become one. Now, the relationship between the two kingdoms is pretty good.*

The only concern was the incompetent future king—Claude. But he heard that was gradually becoming resolved.

Claude had reformed, and not a trace of his previous self could be seen.

*I couldn't think of him as the same person who drove me away before. I hope that kingdom of such great power will be an aide to Lynchgiham.*

It was good for the world to be so peaceful—so concluded Philip.

*“Lord Vincent, I’ve made a crown for you.*

*“Let me put it on you.”*

“Thank you. Previously, didn’t you give me a flower necklace? Why do you all insist upon giving me such presents?”

Al and Mars came and put a flower crown on Vincent.

Vincent didn’t smile at all, but he seemed to be happy.

Knowing how he truly felt was a little difficult.

That was a well-known fact amongst the spirits.

*“It’s because Vincent has a beautiful heart.”*

*“The others and I can understand that.”*

Al and Mars said that.

“...When I came here, none of you were scared of me despite my being called the ‘Duke of Ice.’”

Vincent sighed.

*My first impression of him was that he’s a cold man. However, I seem to have been mistaken. Al and Mars were quickly attached to him. There’s no doubt that he’s a kindhearted man.*

Looking at Vincent, Philip inadvertently thought so.

At the suggestion of Nigel and the others, Vincent became the guardian of the spirits.

Over the past year, Philip had developed a friendship with Vincent.

They sometimes quarreled about the forest’s defense, but it wasn’t like they were on bad terms.

Until now, no one had advised Philip regarding such things.

Therefore, Vincent’s existence, someone who’d give him frank opinions regarding that matter, was valuable.

*Thanks to that, the village has become richer. Everyone seems to be living*

*with peace of mind... I truly have to thank Vincent and the others.*

Al and Mars spun around Vincent's head.

"Don't bother him too much."

*"Alright."*

*"We'll be more disciplined."*

After Philip reprimanded them, Al and Mars flew somewhere else.

"It isn't like I'm annoyed or anything."

"That isn't the case. Also, it's about time to leave. Still, I never expected for Vince to welcome Al and Mars... I mean, my first impression of you wasn't that good."

"Me? Ha!"

Vincent spat out.

"It's just, I like cute things."

"...How surprising. After all, you never mentioned a word about that until now."

"Because you didn't ask."

Vincent, who seemed to be dissatisfied, folded his arms.

By the way, Philip heard that Vincent gave Eliane a talisman when she was about to take an exam.

He was called the 'Duke of Ice', and had untouchable aura to him. However, coming from him, that act may not be that surprising.

Philip became more convinced of that over the past year.

"Hmm. Then, do you want to leave?"

Vincent stood up.

As of the present, Philip and Vincent were dressed more formal than usual.

Vincent wore light blue formal wear.



Even though he was a man, he was beautiful enough to leave spectators speechless.

On the other hand, at first glance, Philip didn't seem to have changed much.

However, he wore a black bow tie around his neck. His attire was more gorgeous than usual.

"That's right. Anyway, this attire is hard to move in."

"It's the clothes that I've prepared. In my opinion, it looks good."

"Haha, I'm a bit happy to hear that from you. I more or less wanted her to say that to me."

"That sounds very much like you."

That was right.

She went far away—Philip was sure of it.

*I... am truly fond of her. Whenever I think about her, the inside of my chest feels... fuzzy? What is this feeling...?*

The Spirit King still didn't know love.

Philip still didn't know that what he was feeling was love.

"What's wrong, Spirit King?"

"Nothing."

Philip regained his composure.

"Let's leave the village early. If we're late, Nigel will be angry."

"Indeed."

The two laughed a little and left.

# Chapter 126

## Today, You're the Most Beautiful in the World

□ Nigel's POV

"Older brother, you look really handsome!"

Lynchgiham.

In a certain waiting room in the royal castle, I had changed into white formal wear. I had since been waiting for a long time.

"Thank you, Cecily."

I gently patted Cecily's head after she had complimented me.

It had been a year ever since I defeated the Demon King.

Since then, just like everyone else, I had uneventful days.

After the state of the royal capital had settled down to a certain extent, His Majesty the King of Lynchgiham—my father, went to Verclaim.

He had an appointed meeting there, and I thought he had a meaningful discussion.

My father—

"—Is that really His Majesty the King of Verclaim? He has changed a lot! I didn't expect the discussion to go so smoothly."

He couldn't hide his surprise.

Whether or not the royal capital, which had been invaded by the demons, had returned to the same situation as before—

was difficult to say.

However, other kingdoms, which had changed their minds, had appeared to help the kingdom. The reconstruction had proceeded without falling into confusion.

For some reason, the Kingdom of Verclaim was considered powerful.

Regardless, no matter how weak it was, the other kingdoms probably thought it'd be better for them to gain Verclaim's favor rather than wage war against it.

Or, it could also be because they were afraid of the existence of Lynchgiam, the country which had assisted Verclaim.

...Either way, it worked, so it was fine.

Everyone loved peace for some reason.

Nevertheless, Verclaim was famous for launching military attacks here and there—

—as such, they were probably nervous.

“N, Nigel, you look incredible. I wish your late mother could see you...”

“Father, you're exaggerating. You should never cry—especially in front of others. It's embarrassing...”

My father cried as soon as he saw me.

He kept wiping his eyes with his handkerchief, but he still couldn't stop the overflowing tears.

It was unacceptable for a king to show such a side of himself in front of the public.

My father, who always seemed dignified and dependable, now looked like a child.

“What do you think, Ralph?”

He also asked the Fenrir, Ralph, while turning towards him.

Ralph stared straight at me and shook his head.

“I'm sorry, I don't understand what he said. I'm sure he's blessing me.”

It was when I tried to say that.

*“You ask me for my opinion? Isn't it obvious? You look cool. That appearance belongs to the future king of this kingdom.*

*Ralph has been watching you for many years, but... child Nigel feels like a*

lie.”

Somehow—I felt like I heard Ralph’s voice.

“Huh?”

I immediately tried to listen, but Ralph returned to his usual appearance and comfortably laid his head down.

Cecily’s eyes also went round. She then turned towards me.

“J, just now, Ralph... never mind.”

I probably misheard it.

I felt like I just heard Ralph spoke... but that couldn’t be the case.

Because only Eliane could converse with a Fenrir.

“Eliane...”

Eliane’s face came to mind.

“Older brother, are you lonely after all? Because, after you returned to Lynchgiham—”

“No, not at all. There’s Cecily, father, and Ralph... but, it’s been a year since she disappeared before my eyes. I’m just a little lonely.”

“It can’t be helped... back then, older sister used to play with Cecily, so she’s lonely, too.”

Cecily looked depressed.

It happened in an instant.

There wasn’t even a chance for the loneliness to set in.

When I thought of Eliane, my chest was about to rupture.

I wanted to hug my beloved!

...But I couldn’t.

Because she—

“—Nigel, it’s about time. Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

My father, who had managed to stop crying, spoke with a crisp expression.

—Today was a special day for me.

...It should be the same for that person, too.

I left the room and walked down the long corridor.

Then, everyone extended their hands toward a certain room as I touched the doorknob.

“Older brother.”

Cecily, who stood next to me, clenched her hands.

I stared at her, and nodded, pushing the door open all at once—

“Sorry for making you wait.”

A bride adorned in white.

An otherworldly beauty.

It was as if she was radiating her own light.

With her gentle eyes and smile, she turned towards me.

“You’re very beautiful—Eliane.”

I said so to my beloved—Eliane.

# Chapter 127

## Happiness

*It is me! Eliane!*

It was my wedding day with Nigel.

I was dressed in a bridal dress, and Nigel was clad in white unlike usual!

The tension went up—

— *it's the best!*

As for me, I couldn't deny that my tension was high.

But it couldn't be helped.

Because it was such a great day!

—After defeating the Demon King.

I was overcome by feeling that my blood was draining out, and almost fell over.

“Eliane!”

However, thanks to Nigel's immediate assistance, I never fell to the ground.

“Are you alright!?”

“Y, yes, I am a bit tired... I believe I have used too much magic. You do not have to be so panicked, right?”

“Well, as long as you're alright...”

Nigel said that, but his expression remained uneasy.

I still vividly recalled it.

—Then, I heard the Goddess' voice.

*“By creating a ‘path’, you were able to draw out 100% of my power. But*

*my power is too strong for some people. As such, it will take some time to get used to it. This time, even though it was only once, you've received my power.*

*Therefore, you might be a bit more tired than usual. Ah, please be assured, it's not life-threatening."*

Then, I squeezed my remaining power and telepathically contacted Douglas. I told him to pick us up. Afterwards, I lost consciousness.

"Then, for an entire year, it was cumbersome."

I already felt nostalgic.

After finishing the post-treatment together with Nigel and returning to Lynchgiham, it was tedious!

It was finally announced in a grand way that I was Nigel's fiancée.

From there, full-scale queen training began.

However, fortunately, I already learned about the manners and custom of the social circles when I was in my former kingdom, so I didn't have much trouble.

Regardless, there were many who spoke out because a commoner like me became Nigel's fiancée.

There were also many ladies whom were aiming for the position of Nigel's fiancée—it was inevitable.

Furthermore, I also had to undergo exclusive training to adapt to the Goddess' power!

Thanks to that, I was able to create a barrier all over the world, just like the Original Saint.

*May the world become more peaceful.*

With that feeling, things that had gone well that year continued to prosper.

However, Nigel was also busy.

I realized that we didn't have time to be with each other, so I made a promise with him.

*“Let’s meet less often until things settled down. At this rate, we’ll end up doing things half-heartedly.”*

When he heard that, Nigel had a dark expression for a moment, but he did think the same way. Eventually, he accepted my proposal.

Although, that didn’t mean we didn’t meet at all.

About once a month, I made time to meet up with Nigel.

But sometimes, when I had a meal with him...

*“I feel like going crazy not being able to meet you every day! The ‘Eliane component’ in me isn’t enough! I’m crazy for you! I’m lonely...”*

He passionately said that.

Sometimes, he also said, *“Eliane will disappear from my sight!”* But he was probably exaggerating...

I was lonely as well...!

Over the past year, the situation had changed again. I was only able to endure it for so long. Finally, I was able to come this far.

I thought Nigel endured it well, too.

*“Eliane... you’re always beautiful... but you’re even more beautiful today. It’s like a dream, to open this door and see you...”*

Nigel took my hand. It was as if he was enchanted by me.

Everyone else was looking at us with smiles.

— *Did Nigel become more passionate!?*

But he must have been quite patient.

Thus, I decided to convince him.

*“N, Nigel, it is embarrassing, everyone is here...”*

*“Hmm? So? Is Eliane unhappy?”*

*“That is not the case, I am happy!”*

Being connected with a loved one and being blessed by everyone around us...



...There may be no greater happiness than that!

I had always yearned for such happiness!

“Fufu, I chose the dress and did the makeup. It seems that His Highness Nigel is also pleased. It’s a great joy as a maid.”

Beside me, Abby, who looked a little tired, said so.

It seemed that she was rushing all over the kingdom looking for a dress and cosmetics that would suit my wedding day.

It couldn’t be helped, she was just like that.

As a result—I became surprisingly beautiful. I praised myself.

“Older sister is beautiful.”

“Ah... this reminds me of the day I married my late wife.”

*“You’re beautiful, Eliane, let Ralph praise you.”*

Cecily, the king, and Ralph also praised me.

...Uu.

*Is it really fine for me to be so happy?!*

“Ah, Eliane, are you ready? Hmm, that’s pretty good. You’re more beautiful than anyone I’ve ever seen.”

“Oh, Douglas.”

While saying that, Douglas also entered the room with his arms crossed.

“You’re wearing formal clothing today.”

Because he always wore clothes like the national outfit, the neat-looking Douglas was kind of fresh.

“That’s right. After all, I can’t bring shame to you, especially considering the day.”

“Thank you for your consideration.”

“Even so, Eliane, let me say this again—you’re very beautiful. If you get tired of Nigel, you can always come with me.”

Douglas grinned.

*W, what's with that sudden confession!?*

I felt warm.

“No can do, Douglas. Eliane is mine. I’m never giving her to anyone.”

“Gahaha! I’m just joking. I’m not going to take her from you. Too bad, I’m not confident I can beat you.”

Douglas laughed vigorously and clapped Nigel’s shoulder.

*Enough already!*

Douglas was as mischievous as usual.

“The ceremony is about to begin. Can you escort me, Nigel? Everyone, I will be waiting for you.”

“Okay, but before that—”

Nigel knelt down and bowed his head.

Then, he quickly extended his right hand.

“Eliane, I’ll say this again—will you walk alongside me in the future? I’ll definitely make you happy.”

“That is a foolish question. I am looking forward to working with you. Let us be happy together.”

I took Nigel’s hand and he raised his face.

Then, he smiled.

“Thank you. When Eliane told me that, I feel like I was going to ascend to the Heaven.”

“How many times have you—no, please keep repeating it, because I am anxious, too.”

At my words, Nigel’s his widdened as if he had guessed something, and immediately responded.

“Huh? Haven’t I said it already?”

“You did, just now.”

I also answered and laughed with Nigel.

He whispered 'I love you.' Many times.

I might be lying about being anxious.

When I stared into Nigel's eyes, I knew that his love was real.

"Then, let's go."

"Okay."

Nigel pulled my hand as we headed for the ceremony.

Philip and Vincent were also invited. I wondered if they were enjoying the meal at the wedding hall.

By the way, I made some of the dishes at the wedding hall!

I was confident in them!

As expected, the chef tried to stop me, but I forcibly occupied the kitchen.

...What would those two think if they were to learn about that?

I was sure they'd grimace about how unbecoming my behavior was for a future queen.

*Fufufu.*

Eventually, Nigel and I stepped into the ceremonial hall. The moment we appeared in front of everyone—

—a warm applause filled the entire hall.

I slowly headed to the stage of the ceremony while being watched by everyone.

—I, a true saint, was banished.

—Yes, it all began when my engagement was annulled, and I was exiled.

I was truly upset at that time, but... I was truly happy, now.

After all, no one truly knew what would happen in life.

—Thus, my kingdom was finished.

But it didn't.

There was no end.

No matter how painful it might be, tomorrow would come as long as one was still alive.

Sometimes, it might be painful, but... in the ever passing days, good things may happen.

I was strongly aware of that.

“Nigel.”

“What is it?”

When I called Nigel's name while walking, he turned to face me.

Towards him, I showed a big smile.

“—I am happy!”

-The End